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Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 18 March 1997

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 18 mars 1997

**Standing committee on
social development**

**Comité permanent des
affaires sociales**

Fewer School
Boards Act, 1997

Loi de 1997 réduisant
le nombre de conseils scolaires



Chair: Annamarie Castrilli
Clerk: Tonia Grannum

Présidente : Annamarie Castrilli
Greffière : Tonia Grannum

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Tuesday 18 March 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES
AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Mardi 18 mars 1997

The committee met at 1133 in the Valhalla Inn, Thunder Bay.

FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 RÉDUISANT
LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Consideration of Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système, en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

The Chair (Ms Annamarie Castrilli): Ladies and gentlemen, thank you all very much for being here this morning as we start our hearings in Thunder Bay. As some of you may know, this is the sixth day of our hearings. We've had four in Toronto, one yesterday and we are now here. I'd like to start fairly quickly. Ms McLeod.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): [*Failure of sound system*] that the precedent we've established in the committee is that the official representative of an organization would have 15 minutes to speak, whereas individuals who are not representing an organization would have 10 minutes to speak. I think it's important we continue to observe this, because as you know once again there are a great many people who would like to make submissions who are not going to have that opportunity.

I'm particularly concerned here in northwestern Ontario because, as you know, there wasn't even an opportunity for every board that will be affected by the amalgamation to be officially represented individually.

Interruption.

The Chair: Can we do something about the sound?

Mrs McLeod: I don't know whether it's my cold or theirs; maybe if I speak directly into the microphone.

If the Chair will indulge me, I was raising the concern we have that the precedent of the committee is that when there is an official representative of an organization, such as a school board, that presentation would be 15 minutes

long, and that where an individual is speaking as an individual and not as the representative of a group or association, the presentation would be 10 minutes. It's an important precedent for us to adhere to here because there are so many groups, as well as individuals, who are not going to get time to make submissions.

I've been particularly concerned in northwestern Ontario because just to have each of the boards that will be affected by amalgamation have an opportunity to make any representation at all, we've had to group some of the boards from the northwest and west of Thunder Bay, as well as east of Thunder Bay. There has been inadvertently, and it is inadvertent, an error in developing the schedule today so that individuals who are trustees but are not representing the board have been given 15 minutes, which is not according to precedent.

I think we have an agreement — there are three individuals involved — that to follow precedent they would have 10 minutes. That would free up 15 minutes of time and that could be divided between the two groups of boards. We still can't give a full 15 minutes to each of those separate boards, but at least it would extend their time to about 25 minutes for groups of three boards.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): Yes, I think there's unanimous consent.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Yes, I agree we should be giving the groups of boards as much time as we can and the individuals should be limited to 10 minutes. It's unfortunate we have to limit people because of the time constraints related to the Conservative government's time allocation motion, but since we have to live under those constraints, we should continue the same approach we've used in all the communities we've visited.

The Chair: I gather from Mr Skarica there's unanimous consent. We'll advise the individuals involved of the changes and of the entities involved and we'll proceed according to the agreement we have and which has been followed. In every case where we've had hearings, individuals have been given 10 minutes and organizations have been given 15.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Chair, can I ask a procedural point related to the point we've just discussed? Do I understand that the chair of the Lakehead board will be presenting the Lakehead board's position?

Interjection: Yes.

Mr Hampton: But there are three others from the Lakehead board, Renny Maki, Paul Kennedy and Linda Rydholm, who will be presenting. What I'm having a bit of difficulty understanding here is that some boards of education have actually been excluded. For example, the Atikokan Board of Education tried to appear before this committee and they were told there was no time for the

Atikokan Board of Education, yet I see three people here from the Thunder Bay board in addition to the board chair who is speaking for the board.

I don't understand the procedure which will actually exclude board representatives like the Atikokan board and require other boards to agglomerate their presentation when some individuals from particular boards, it would seem, are given special status.

The Chair: If I could clarify, Mr Hampton, the lists were compiled from lists that were presented by the three caucuses and it's no more complicated than that. I could let members of the subcommittee who presented those lists speak for themselves.

Mrs McLeod: I will, Madam Chair, and I'm sorry to need to delay the start because we have limited enough time here in Thunder Bay, as we had limited enough time in the hearings in Ottawa yesterday. I know we want to get on with it.

There is a great deal of concern here about the numbers of boards as well as groups of individuals who should be able to make a presentation and are not able to. It needs to be very clearly understood, and I think quite frankly the government needs to address the fact that there is more than one representative of the Lakehead board presenting today. My belief is that the official representative, the chair, should have been invited to present and that we should have been able to accommodate all the area boards. The other individuals will be here making representation as individuals, but I think it is regrettable that means the boards have not been given full opportunity to present.

Mr Wildman: The procedure for the subcommittee was that we would look at the large number of organizations and groups, as well as individuals, that had applied to make presentations, far too many for the time allocated by the government, and that we would try to get as representative a group of presenters as possible.

Ms McLeod, I think very generously in terms of her proposals, attempted to get as many boards represented from northwestern Ontario as possible, and to do that suggested we bring boards together. It seems a little bit odd that certain boards, such as Kenora and Dryden and Fort Frances-Rainy River, would essentially end up with something like four minutes each, and we have Red Lake; Beardmore, Geraldton, Longlac; and Hearst, again with about four minutes each, and then we have one board, a very important board but one board, that has not only the chair making a presentation on behalf of the board, but then individual trustees also making presentations, and another board, the Atikokan board, which isn't able to get on at all.

As you said, Chair, the subcommittee attempted to accommodate as many as possible, but I don't quite understand how we ended up with a situation where one board has many trustees making presentations, or at least three trustees making presentations, two beyond the official presentation of the board, and one other board that is affected by this amalgamation proposal not even able to get on the list.

1140

The Chair: To respond to that I can only repeat that we are constrained by the government's time allocation

motion. We can't hear all of the 1,400 individuals and groups that have applied to appear before the committee. This list was compiled from lists produced by the members of the subcommittee. It obviously is not a perfect list but —

Mr Wildman: I would suggest that perhaps one of the trustees from the Lakehead would be willing to give up her or his time for the Atikokan board.

Mr Skarica: I wonder if I could —

Interruption.

The Chair: Let's set out the rules and procedures right from the beginning. There are going to be some times during the course of the day when you will feel that you either agree or disagree with what's being said, and you will want to voice your approval or disapproval. That makes our process longer and it makes it even more difficult for people to present. We have very limited time. I would ask you please, in the interest of fairness, to allow us to proceed without intervention.

Mr Skarica: I have a suggestion, but we need unanimous consent. I have canvassed with my colleagues and I'm proposing that we add 15 minutes to the end of the day for the Atikokan board. That way we'll hear from all the boards in the area.

Mr Hampton: That doesn't quite deal with the issue, Madam Chair. I don't understand why the Fort Frances-Rainy River board, the Dryden board, the Kenora board, the Red Lake board, the Beardmore, Geraldton and Longlac board and the Hearst Board of Education in effect get about three minutes each to make their views known, and yet for some reason the Thunder Bay board is not only going to have the chair, but is going to have a Mr Paul Kennedy, a Ms Linda Rydholm and a Mr Renny Maki, who are all going to have 10 minutes each. This seems a bit absurd. I'd put it to the government that Maki, Rydholm and Kennedy ought, like the other boards, to be required to combine their time.

The Chair: In the interest of expediting this, I think I hear a motion from Mr Wildman and Mr Hampton that we ask for unanimous consent to ask those three individuals to retire in favour of other boards. Is that what you're doing, Mr Wildman?

Mr Wildman: No, I suggested one do that, but I think Mr Hampton has proposed a compromise which is that all three of those presenters from the Lakehead board combine their time as the other boards have had to do to free up some other time.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent for that motion?

Mr Skarica: Then we give the Atikokan board — how are we going to use that time?

Mr Hampton: I think at the very least that should be added to the times of the other boards.

Mr Skarica: I don't have any problem with that, but I also think we should add 10 minutes in any event for the Atikokan board so we have heard from all the boards in the area. Is everyone agreed to that?

The Chair: Mrs McLeod, do you want to add anything for your caucus?

Mrs McLeod: I would like to see that all the area boards have been treated fairly in terms of our time allocations when we do this, because I think we just

passed a motion that would have taken the 15 minutes we freed up by reducing those presentations to 10 minutes. If we can free up more time, let's be sure it's allocated fairly between all those boards absolutely, as well as adding the Atikokan board. Madam Chair, I just —

The Chair: I think we're going to need some very specific direction here as to what it is you want us to do, because the clerk will have to deal with it immediately this morning.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate that, and I want to point out that this is not some kind of oppositional tactic. Yesterday, in Ottawa, we were relatively successful, even with limited time, in hearing from each of the boards. I think members were impressed with the presentation they heard repeatedly from Lanark, Leeds-Grenville, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, and Prescott-Russell, four boards that are to be combined into one, and that it was important for members to hear the concerns of those boards. That's equally true as they come into northwestern Ontario. Each of these boards is about to lose its identity in the amalgamation, and it is very important for them to be able to make the case to this committee as to why they believe this is not the direction to go.

The Chair: I sense that everybody agrees with respect to that. I'm looking for specifics as to what we want the clerk to do.

Mr Hampton: As I look at it, if we combine the three independent trustees from the Thunder Bay board into one presentation, that will free up 20 minutes, and if we add 15 minutes on the end for the Atikokan board, it would work out this way: The boards from Red Lake, Beardmore, Hearst, which are presenting at 2 o'clock, will have additional time; the boards from Fort Frances-Rainy River, Dryden and Kenora, which are appearing at 1:15, will have additional time; and the Atikokan board will have additional time at the end or whenever they can fit in.

The Chair: Is it your proposal those boards be given 20 minutes each? Is that what you're suggesting?

Mrs McLeod: We already had 25 added with the change.

The Chair: So it would be a half-hour?

Mr Hampton: A half-hour each.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent with respect to that?

Mrs McLeod: How much time will the Atikokan board receive?

The Chair: I think we'll only have 15 minutes for the Atikokan board if that's all we're adding at the end.

Mrs McLeod: Atikokan presenting as a group.

The Chair: They would be presenting as a standalone group.

Mr Skarica: Maybe we should get going.

The Chair: Is that agreeable? Anyone opposed? Terrific. The clerk will ensure everyone is notified of that. With that in mind, we'll try and have a revised schedule as we go along.

NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO SMALL BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

The Chair: Could I call upon the Northwestern Ontario Small Business Association, Mark Lawrence.

Welcome, Mr Lawrence. We're delighted to have you with us this morning. If you have followed the discussions, you know you will have 15 minutes in which to make your presentation. If there is any time left over, the committee would be very pleased to ask questions.

Mr Mark Lawrence: The Northwestern Ontario Small Business Association represents approximately 125 small businesses in the area and the outlying districts of Thunder Bay, Schreiber and Terrace Bay.

At the outset, our association is in favour of this legislation, as we feel this is the initial step in the downsizing of the large, cumbersome bureaucracy that has become today's education delivery system. We feel that as taxpayers and business owners we do not see an efficient use of our tax dollars, and our youth do not have an adequate level of basic skills under the present system.

While total enrolment has only increased approximately 16% over the last 10 years, school board spending has increased by approximately 82%, spending increases that came directly from increased taxes. Business not only supports the system through realty taxes; business also pays an additional amount through business tax levies. These tax costs burden the business regardless of whether or not the business is profitable. In many instances our members have to borrow money and pay interest on these borrowings just to pay their taxes and support the system.

The realty and business tax burden on small business is onerous and is causing business failures at an alarming rate. As an association we feel that business tax should be abolished and the required tax revenue be levied equally against assessments of residential and business real estate only. Businesses can no longer afford the additional level of taxation by way of business taxes.

With specific regard to Bill 104, our association is in favour of the positive steps we see this legislation achieving through reduced costs and thereby reduced taxes.

In particular, we applaud the following:

The reduction in the number of boards and their reduced spending power.

The limits on the number of trustees.

The capping of honorariums.

The minimum qualifications, and disqualifications, for eligibility in elections.

The inclusion of conflict of interest and nepotism guidelines.

The elimination of the board's direct authority to levy taxes.

The requirement for accountability with regard to finances and costs.

The greater emphasis on empowering school councils.

The proposed new student funding model promoting equality throughout Ontario.

The implementation of the Education Improvement Commission.

In conclusion, our association has tried to bring the concerns of the small business sector to you, our concerns for our survival. We can no longer raise our prices to cover increased taxes, what with increased competition from every corner of the continent and now from every corner of the world. We cannot allow our publicly funded bodies to control their existence without true account-

ability to the taxpayer and without limits to their power and authority.

We thank you for this opportunity to address this committee and allowing us to voice our opinions. We trust that our input will be of mutual benefit.

1150

Mr Hampton: Mr Lawrence, thank you. Let me say, you recite the figures and the numbers in the Progressive Conservative Party briefing note very well. We've heard them from all the members of the Conservative caucus and you've obviously got a copy yourself.

You talk about the savings. The estimate is that Ontario, according to the government's own figures, spends \$13.5 billion on education annually. The government's own briefing note says that by amalgamating all these boards — and some of them are going to be absolutely huge boards that require driving distances of four or five hours to get to a board meeting — this will save \$150 million across the province. They say that is a 1% saving.

My question to you is this: Does it make sense to you that we're going to abolish much of the local control over education, that we're going to create boards of education where people have very little community of interest? I'm not sure how someone in Terrace Bay or Schreiber and their schools will relate to schools in downtown Thunder Bay. I'm not sure how someone in Red Lake will necessarily relate to a school in Atikokan, which is literally five hours' drive away. Does it make sense to you that we're going to sacrifice all those things, sacrifice the local control, sacrifice any community of interest, for an apparent saving of 1%?

Mr Lawrence: I haven't seen the numbers and I don't know what the management model is, but I'm sure there's a management model that can address your concerns. I see personally that most of the local control will be within the school and not through a board in the future.

Mr Skarica: Thank you very much for your presentation and for taking time out of your day to address us today. We heard yesterday in Ottawa from the Nepean Chamber of Commerce, and they had this to say about jobs in their area. When they have 2,000 high-tech jobs there that "go begging in this region because of a lack of qualified individuals, something is wrong," he told us. "Academia must be able to re-engineer and react to global economic labour force realities as fast as business must, to ensure the survival of its students and itself." Is that at all a problem here, that there are jobs but a lack of qualified people to obtain them?

Mr Lawrence: I think to some extent that's true, although business would like to be responsible for the training aspect of that. We need the basic skills coming out of school and we don't think that's coming out in this day and age.

Mr Skarica: What changes would you like to see to address that problem of basic skills? Could you give us any suggestions?

Mr Lawrence: I think by the basic idea of having parents involved at the school level and having more control and more autonomy by the principal and vice-principal right in the school as a small microcosm of the

entire process by having the people who are in the school empowered to run the school and make the decisions right at the local level.

Mrs McLeod: I would assure Mr Skarica that the greater concern that we have in northwestern Ontario is not the one we heard in Ottawa, which is the lack of people to fill the jobs. The lack of jobs is the greatest concern we have here, which is why I'd like to address a couple of particularly northwest concerns to you, Mr Lawrence, if there's time.

One is on the assumption you have that taxes are going to go down as a result of this. I have a particular concern that here in the northwest the business taxes are actually going to go up. I don't think there's much question that the business taxes will go up. You'll be aware that business still has to pay education taxes. The education tax is only being taken off residential properties, not off commercial properties. On top of that, business has to pick up its share of those new costs being put on to the municipal property tax base. There's absolutely no question that at the end of the day, while there might potentially be some saving for residential taxpayers — that's not sure yet — there will be an increase in taxes for the business taxpayer. As a northwesterner, that concerns me because I think the margin of survival for northwestern Ontario businesses is very slight. Would that not be a concern for you as a businessperson here, to see taxes actually go up?

Mr Lawrence: Yes, that's our concern. We don't agree that education funding should come off of residential taxes. We think it should be spread across the entire base of property, both commercial and residential.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate that, because it really is a concern for me.

The other concern you've touched on is the whole question of the dollars that would be saved. The government's own figures suggest that the actual saving from the amalgamation of trustees, just the trustee portion alone, is about \$23 million on a \$14-billion budget. I don't see that as a lot of money being saved by amalgamation of boards and the fewer trustees. What I am concerned about is the one you touched on, and that's the funding formula that is supposed to provide equity across the province.

In the north we tend to worry that funding formulas won't really recognize northern concerns. I think you would probably agree that education and equality of education in northern Ontario communities is absolutely critical for our survival and we need to truly have some local ability to make sure we are getting what our students need in our classrooms. Would it concern you that we're going to lose that when the government, Queen's Park, takes over all the funding and makes all the decisions for us?

Mr Lawrence: Not as we see the new proposals, the new models coming down, where the parents provide the local input and the staff at the school provide the other side of it.

Mrs McLeod: But they won't have any funding control. So you would see every parent council being able to lobby Queen's Park independently for the dollars they need?

Mr Lawrence: That's my personal opinion, that the school councils will assume more authority that way and be granted more authority.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Lawrence, for taking the time to be with us today and to share your views with us.

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RED LAKE DISTRICT
PUBLIC SCHOOLS PARENT COUNCIL
RED LAKE DISTRICT
HIGH SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL

The Chair: I call upon the parent councils of Red Lake district, Tess Martone of the Golden Learning Centre and Ruth Londry of the parent council. Welcome.

Mrs Tess Martone: My name is Tess Martone. I'm really nervous. I've never done this before.

The Chair: You don't have to be nervous.

Mrs Martone: I have two children. I have a six-year-old son and a nine-year-old daughter in the public school system. They're the reason I'm here today, because I'm really concerned about the changes this bill will bring to education. I also represent the parent councils of the public schools in the Red Lake district. We are three schools in three communities and we have about 750 students.

The purpose of this presentation is to ensure the continued delivery of quality education to our children, which we already have. We've achieved this through the innovative way we manage our operating procedures. I'd like to address these in five points, the first being classroom size.

The Red Lake board reduced its administrative staff from 11 to five and reorganized our operating procedures to a site-based management approach at all our schools. Our principals now have the ability to make the decisions necessary for the smooth operation of our schools without having to deal with needless bureaucracy, but at the same time they're held fully accountable for their actions to the board and the school parent councils. Further details are available in our written submission.

Our full-time principals and secretaries ensure that teachers can concentrate on delivering the highest quality of education possible by minimizing or preventing interference in the daily operation of the classroom. Our vice-principals are used for full-time instructional purposes, thus reducing classroom size. Almost all our site-based model approaches directly affected our classroom sizes. We are committed to keeping them down. If class sizes go up, the teacher workload goes up and less time is available for planning and implementing extracurricular activities, which brings me to my second point.

If there are further staff cuts, extracurricular activities would no longer be able to be maintained. Our public schools provide lunchroom supervisors. These supervisors free up the teachers to run the extracurricular activities. As far as programs are concerned, the Golden Learning Centre has an exemplary science program compared to the other boards in the region. This has been accomplished through the cooperative efforts of businesses in our area, a point I'll come back to in a moment because it's very important.

Regarding special education needs, as a parent I'm very concerned because Bill 104 does not mention special education services. The Red Lake board has made a commitment to supplying student assistance for all our high-needs students. Currently our public school offers the reading recovery program. This program targets children who are six years old and ensures that they're able to read. It's very successful and it alleviates the need for special identification for special needs at a later date. This is a shared resource with other boards that is cost-saving.

We also feel that with smaller classroom sizes, gifted children are more readily challenged and those with special needs can be identified and assisted much more quickly.

Special education needs are very important to the parent councils. We feel they are very valuable and we treasure any services that are implemented to facilitate the needs of these children.

Golden Learning Centre also works cooperatively with the Harmony Centre and hires developmentally disabled persons to work in our school, which leads me to my fourth point: cooperative industrial partnerships.

Through the partnerships of local industries and township councils in cooperation with the Red Lake board, several cost-saving projects have been implemented. One industry donated \$20,000 to help our board implement an alternative energy project that saves the Golden Learning Centre alone \$45,000 per year. These are the kinds of ventures that we as a parent council support.

We've also benefited by receiving a subsidized swim program in which our children receive a safe, quality program. The area we live in is surrounded by over 3,000 lakes, so obviously this is a very valuable and treasured program that prevents catastrophe from befalling us. Since this program began there has not been a single local student drowning incident in our area.

Also, through further cooperative ventures, the Red Lake and Madsen public schools share their resources with Family Futures, which is again cost-saving.

The Golden Learning Centre has an exemplary science room due to a \$50,000 industrial contribution.

The Red Lake Board of Education is also able to bring to the Red Lake district, through the cooperative efforts of business, a one-of-a-kind program in North America on the order of \$60,000. This student leadership program taught to grade 3 students on up to the OAC level and it is a wonderful program. I've looked at it myself.

As far as the arts are concerned, in larger centres only day trips are required to expose children to the arts, music and Canadian heritage. Our children, to participate in any of these areas, must travel out of town at a very minimum of two and one half hours one way, and they very often have to stay overnight. The cost is great. These facts mean our children rarely get to participate in the arts.

However, currently at the Golden Learning Centre we're in the process of a theatrical production entitled Pinocchio and the Fairy Modmother. This production is under the leadership of our full-time principal and secretaries, who have worked in cooperation with local businesses, the township, regional airlines, numerous parent

volunteers and with an internationally celebrated playwright to put on this production in our school virtually cost-free.

The Red Lake area has also worked cooperatively with other school boards to ensure the safe, efficient and money-saving transportation of our children.

We suggest that when the funding model is developed our anomalies be given serious consideration, such as cost per pupil for transportation, which Ruth will elaborate on in a moment, and cost per teacher development. Currently, we have no consultants to assist our teachers with professional development. These are anomalies that require special consideration in the funding model.

Quoting our Minister of Finance, Ernie Eves, in the 1995 fiscal and economic statement, page 18 reads, "Our schools should be providing students with greater equality of opportunity through funding that is shared fairly across the province." In the fair funding model, we are confident that this committee will take seriously the anomalies that affect the north.

Due to time constraints, these are just a few of the cooperative ventures. The remaining can be viewed in our written submission.

I have said all of this to help you understand the uniqueness of the Red Lake district. The trust and caring that has built up in our area has taken years to accomplish. As a parent council, we are very concerned that we will lose this trust and these cooperative ventures. These issues are people-driven, which have built up over time through the efforts of very fine school trustees, which leads me to my fifth concern: trustee representation.

We feel it is essential that our children are represented fairly. In order to ensure fairness and equity, we request that a committee be formed to facilitate the process, because the bottom line is our children. We want them to continue to reach their full potential.

If I can refer you to this map here, the proposed district school board 5 is as large an area as the entire southern Ontario region. This unique, isolated and large geographical area causes us to be concerned that the trust and cooperation that has developed through the years will disintegrate without a personal touch.

We feel that the innovative way of handling operating procedures in our area can be used as a model for the new board structure. We appeal to you that whatever changes you make, you keep these unique issues to northwestern Ontario in consideration. There's a proverb that says, "For lack of guidance, a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure."

This committee has shown wisdom in having these hearings, and I'd like to thank you for your time.

Mrs Ruth Londry: My name is Ruth Londry and I am a parent of two teenage boys who attend the Red Lake District High School, a district school of approximately 400 students. I am speaking on behalf of the high school parent council.

Bill 104 is An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system. The map in front of me shows the size of the proposed district 5 superimposed over southern Ontario. The main concern of Red Lake area parent councils is the size of the proposed district 5 and how it will impact on our students.

In order for a board to be effective, it must have good communications between the schools, the parents and students. Travel time to attend meetings in the proposed district 5 will vary from three to six hours one way. This is equivalent to driving from Toronto to Sudbury, and on much poorer roads, I might add, and at a cost of 72.8 cents a litre for regular gas. The distances will automatically eliminate people from taking positions on the board because their jobs and/or family obligations will not allow them the time to do the travelling required.

The use of modern technology is not a viable option. Northwestern Ontario does not have cell phones. Getting on the Internet is a major frustration as there are no fibre-optic lines to handle the demand at this time in Red Lake. Talking on a speakerphone is not the same as meeting face to face. The fact that this committee is travelling to some parts of Ontario is an admission of this fact. If some members of the board are meeting at the same table while others are on the phone, you do not have equity.

Due to the number of students, we might — and I stress "might" — have one trustee representing our area. If we don't have any representation, we have no voice in any of the decision-making processes. This will have a major impact on our students. No representation means no equity. We will lose accessibility to our board members, and in turn, that will make accountability much harder.

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I have the personal experience of working in a small government office which is part of a larger organization. Our office in Red Lake has no say in any changes simply because we are outvoted by the larger offices of Kenora, Dryden and Rainy River. Many of the changes in the last year have actually been detrimental to the Red Lake office and its clients because our situation is different than that of the larger towns. I am very concerned that this will be the situation in a school board of this size. The losers this time, though, are our children, our students.

Maintaining the programs that our students now enjoy is the number one priority of the Red Lake parent council. Take sports programs like Norwossa. It costs \$100-plus per Red Lake student, compared to \$50 per student in Dryden, to attend sports functions, just because of the distance we are from the Trans-Canada Highway.

The value of sports and music programs is well documented. Our athletes have competed and come out victorious many times over much larger high schools. Our band regularly shows that small can be good. These programs are important for the health, esteem and identity of our school.

Will a large board recognize our unique problem of extra costs for travel? Will our students be assured of equity of programs, like the minister has promised? Providing standardized grants per child within the board will not reflect the travel circumstances that students from the Red Lake area face.

Standardization of grants will not improve the effectiveness, or the quality, of the Red Lake district student programs. We are concerned about co-op programs. In a small community it is a must to have good working relationships with local businesses. We are already at a disad-

vantage over larger centres because the number of co-op opportunities is limited. Will, or can, a large board understand the problems we face in this area?

We are concerned about professional development, that it will suffer when attendance by teachers is restricted by the cost of time and travel. Will a large board be able to recognize the issues that are unique to our particular school? The present board, recognizing this problem, has been proactive in recruiting other agencies in the community to share the costs associated with bringing in speakers. A workshop on fetal alcohol syndrome is just one example. Fetal alcohol syndrome, although not unique, is a major problem in our area. Will our board, the size of Belgium, still be able to work effectively with local community organizations? If our Red Lake teachers cannot maintain an acceptable level of professional development, then who are the biggest losers? Our children.

The bill does not mention special education services, SEAC committees or board-mandated responsibilities under the Education Act or the Human Rights Code. The Red Lake school board has shown over the years a strong commitment to identified students. This has involved ensuring that testing is done and followed through, and that is not an easy task in Red Lake.

In order to ensure fairness, we are asking for an education improvement committee under Bill 104, subsection 338(3), to help the transition into the new system. We want to be sure that communication is possible and that regional disparity is recognized. We feel this cannot happen in a board this size and we want the size of the proposed District 5 reduced.

The Chair: Thank you both very much for appearing here today. There was certainly no need for you to be concerned about being nervous. Your presentation was forthright, straightforward, and I liked the visual element.

CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES, LAKEHEAD AREA OFFICE

The Chair: I call upon CUPE, northwestern Ontario, Jules Tupker. Welcome, Mr Tupker. As you take your places, could you please introduce your co-presenter.

Mr Jules Tupker: My name is Jules Tupker. My co-presenter is Howard Matthews. He is the other national representative in the CUPE office in the Lakehead area office. We will be doing a joint presentation.

Mr Howard Matthews: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be presenting the first half of our presentation, and then I'll turn it over to Brother Tupker, as we say in the union movement, for our recommendations.

Thank you for the opportunity of making this presentation on behalf of CUPE's members in northwestern Ontario. Our primary focus in this document is the job security of our members and the protection of the fundamental democratic right to freely negotiate our collective agreements.

I'm going to point to a couple of parts on this page and the next. Our primary concern with this piece of legislation is in clause 335(3)(f) of the act, where it's stated, among the specific powers accorded to this commission, it is required to "consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the

minister on how to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards."

This commission has wide-ranging powers, and two of the instructions as specifically given are again — I want to emphasize these words — "promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services." That's in the middle of page 1.

This provision gives a clear indication that the government intends to contract out, to the greatest extent possible, the work performed by non-employees of school boards.

If you turn to page 2 — this issue has come up over and over with this government — at the bottom of the page we cite a document that was leaked to CUPE in December 1996 entitled *Removing Barriers to Restructuring and Alternative Service Delivery: Labour Relations, preliminary discussion*. This was actually a Ministry of Municipal Affairs document. Listed as "barriers" in the text of the document are: "(1) contracting-clauses in collective agreements" — this would be freely negotiated contracting-out clauses — "and (4) successor rights."

In addition to that — I notice there's a member of the Who Does What panel slated to speak later; she's been combined with some others now, but one of the recommendations was, at the top of page 3, that "school boards not deliver these services," and that is building and maintenance of schools, transportation and other administrative services, "directly but should outsource these functions to municipalities or local service providers, or create local cooperative service agencies...subject to provincially established criteria."

So there are three strong positions taken from government directly or commissions of government.

With these protections we're not talking about privileges. The right to negotiate protections against contracting out and protections regarding successor rights are recognized as fundamental human rights. The protections regarding successor rights were put in place to prevent unscrupulous employers from subverting the negotiating rights of employees, which would be meaningless without them. Successor rights are part and parcel of union recognition rights, which are fundamental human rights recognized by the United Nations.

Furthermore, these rights are not the product of some left-wing government. They were put in place in every province in the country and by the federal government, by mainly Conservative and Liberal governments. These rights deal with fundamental human rights, not ideology.

Regarding contracting out, the right to negotiate is really nothing more than the right to negotiate a contract with an employer that the employer is bound by for its term. A simple example in the private sector would be Busy Bee Cleaners negotiating a contract with someone for three years; they're darn well bound by that contract for the three years. This government wants to legislate our collective agreements, which are the same thing in a bargaining context, out of existence. If you did that to the private sector, you'd be tossed out of office before your term was over.

Furthermore, the right to negotiate no contracting out is the right to negotiate job security, a right that is universally recognized. There is no guarantee that unions

will succeed in negotiating no contracting-out clauses. However, the right to do so is fundamental. These rights do not need to be explained to anyone except the most right-wing ideologue. Unfortunately, that is apparently what we are dealing with. The proponents of contracting out view workers as commodities to be bought and sold as cheaply as possible.

The Lakehead Board of Education is the largest board in the northwestern Ontario area and is primarily staffed and operated by board employees, more than 200 of whom are our members, and we have long-standing connections to this community. We don't just work for the community. We are a part of the community. Our members do their jobs because they are committed to them and to the Lakehead Board of Education. We are not commodities.

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Our members' jobs and their time with the board are not just pit stops on the way to somewhere else or a few lines on our résumés in search for something better elsewhere. It is our career, and our members intend to stay in these jobs and in this community throughout their working lives.

The Lakehead Board of Education has one of the most effective and efficient operations in the province. This didn't just happen in the last two or three years. Our members deserve their fair share of credit for this. We have ownership in our community and we have earned equity in our jobs. We have done a good job for the board and we ought not to be subjected to threats of losing our jobs every time the political winds change.

The unwritten bargain with the employer has always been that the best job security is to do a good job. We have lived up to our end of this deal. This long-standing agreement is now being threatened by untested and unproved ideology and not by poor performance.

The board is a large employer. Over the course of time there are certain to be problems in specific areas. The answer is not the shortsighted approach of contracting out or privatizing an otherwise excellent operation piece by piece.

The union has proved, over the course of many years and many problems, that we can and do work with the administration to deal with problems. We do not oppose change for the sake of fighting. A good example is the recent enormous cutbacks in funding from the province. We worked together with the board to rationalize our operations in the face of those cutbacks. There is no inherent conflict between good wages and working conditions and an effective and efficient operation — ask Avenor or Bombardier, Thunder Bay's largest employers. In fact, the two go hand in hand.

We care about providing effective and efficient public services and we always will care. Our jobs depend upon it.

The board and CUPE have negotiated the following language in our collective agreement regarding contracting out. I won't read it all, but in this article our members' work won't be contracted out.

To go on, this article was freely negotiated by the parties. Also, both parties have recognized the value of board employees performing our members' work. As

anyone who has ever been involved in collective bargaining knows, in order to achieve protections like this, the union gave up things in other areas. It is an affront to every principle of democracy for the government to even contemplate legislating these agreements out of existence.

The only benefit to contracting out our members' jobs is the savings that would be realized by replacing unionized workers, who have a collective agreement, with non-union, unemployed workers willing to work for less. My heart goes out to every single worker who is unemployed, so this is not in any way an attack on those poor people. This is union-busting and anti-worker. What it ultimately accomplishes is to lower the standard of living for all workers.

If our members' jobs are legislated away, many of whom have worked for the school board for decades, it will be condemning many of them to a life of abject poverty. They don't make a big income to begin with. We do not propose to make any threats in this document. However, this government needs to take notice that if the choice for our members is abject poverty or fighting for their jobs, then there is no choice. You would see school occupations for many years to come. The contractors would have to clean around our members.

In conclusion, we have focused our main concern regarding the direction of this bill and this government. In regard to our area, we suggest that there also needs to be a hard look taken at the configuration of the enormous geographical area. Both politically and economically this proposal gives rise to many concerns. Even though CUPE would stand to gain members from the merger, so this is a union talking that would probably gain members because we have the majority, we think that the proposal to restrict the merger to the Geraldton, Nipigon-Red Rock and Lake Superior boards and leaving the Lakehead board as is deserves serious consideration.

Mr Tupker: The focus of Brother Matthews's presentation was on job security and the protection of our union's right to negotiate a collective agreement. My portion of the presentation will focus on the effect clause 335(3)(f) of Bill 104 will have on the day-to-day operation of our schools.

CUPE has grave concerns about the process being proposed for the merger and amalgamation of school boards, the government's intention to control curriculum and the government's attack on teachers. However, time restraints allow me to comment only on the areas that directly affect our members.

CUPE represents approximately 36,000 employees in schools and school boards across the province. These employees are custodians, educational assistants, maintenance workers, clerical staff, bus drivers, computer and technical staff, aquatic instructors and foodservice workers, among many more. They are our neighbours and your friends and they are hardworking people who help to make our schools and school system among of the best in the world. The services these people provide go way beyond typing letters, mopping floors and repairing boilers. The people this piece of legislation wants to eliminate are well-trained, long-term employees who know and care about their schools, students and staff.

One example of that occurred earlier this year at one of the schools in Fort Francis, where an eight-year-old student did not return from recess. The teacher inquired of the custodian if he had seen this student. The custodian said no, but that he would certainly check. The custodian left the school, got into his own vehicle, drove around the neighbourhood searching for the student, could not find the student, went back to the school and reported. He notified the police, and then the custodian realized that there was a native hockey tournament going on at the arena, drove to the arena and found the student before the police found the student. This is what caring custodial staff and caring workers in this school board system do for you.

CUPE members, and indeed all employees working for the school boards throughout northwestern Ontario, are dedicated employees who, besides doing their regular duties, provide guidance and support to the students in their schools. Many help out at extra-curricular events. Our members have an interest in maintaining a clean, safe, efficient and friendly environment for students and staff.

The students and staff know they can trust an employee who has been at the school day after day, year after year. I am quite certain that most of the people in this room can remember the name of their school custodian. I know I can, right back to my grade 1 years.

Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, proposes to eliminate these employees and replace them with privatized contract workers who have no vested interest in our schools. Contractors, to keep their costs down and their profits up, will use casual clerical staff to come in for an hour or two to do peak-period duties and then move them to another school, leaving the first school with no staff to deal with day-to-day duties like answering phones, phoning parents and helping students. Contractors will use mobile cleaning crews who drive from school to school in buses. These crews will carry out a quick, no-frills cleaning of the school and then move on to the next school. Special cleaning and repairs that happen throughout the day will be left until the next day or the next, whenever the crew decides to come back.

The employees working for the contractors will have no opportunity to establish a working or social relationship with the students and staff at the schools they service. Regular, long-term employees who provide the support services for school boards are an integral part of the social fabric that exists in our schools. Eliminate these employees and you destroy that fabric. The people who will suffer the most from this bill will be the students, our children. Don't let that happen.

We request that you read and carry out the following recommendations, and these might look familiar. They were presented to you in CUPE's presentation in Toronto. The recommendations are as follows:

Reaffirm the need for the public delivery of education, acknowledging that a public system is more efficient and more equitable.

Defeat Bill 104 and engage in true consultation with stakeholders, the stakeholders you will be hearing from today.

If meaningful consultation with stakeholders still results in school board amalgamations, establish a process that protects jobs. Put fair workfare adjustment programs in place and protect the public delivery of all aspects of the system.

Return accountability to the hands of elected representatives, MPPs and trustees, not the unelected and unaccountable Education Improvement Commission and education improvement committees.

Ensure that elected boards of education are stronger, not weaker; and more accountable, not less accountable.

Finally, invest more, not less, in our public education system.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Tupker and Mr Matthews, for being with us and presenting the views of CUPE, northwestern Ontario. You've used up all of your time. There won't be any time for questions. Thank you for coming.

Mr Tupker: Thank you very much.

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LAKEHEAD BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: I call upon the Lakehead Board of Education, Suzan Labine, Cathy Woodbeck, Jim McCuaig and Bob Allison, please. Thank you very much for being here. We're delighted to have you here with us.

Ms Suzan Labine: Good afternoon. My name is Suzan Labine and I am chair of the Lakehead Board of Education. I am joined today by Cathy Woodbeck, vice-chair; Jim McCuaig, director of education; and Bob Allison, superintendent of business. Thank you for this opportunity to voice our very strong concerns about this legislation.

We are here today to present the solid majority view of our fellow trustees. We hope you take this opportunity to listen carefully.

Bill 104's preamble states that this is An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system. We unequivocally believe that Bill 104 will not achieve these ends but in reality will destabilize and dismantle rather than reform Ontario's public education system.

Particularly, the amalgamation of district school board number 6 will not achieve accountability, effectiveness or improved quality. The drastic reduction of publicly elected representation, reluctant school councils and an added layer of bureaucracy — the Education Improvement Commission and its local committees — will not enhance accountability. We have great concerns about the public's ability to access this new board. Without reasonable public access, where is the accountability?

The complexity of implementing amalgamation redirects administrative and governance energies away from students to a political focus. A board covering 60,000 square kilometres that lacks the infrastructure to effectively communicate is not more effective. A large board that is not responsive to local needs is not more effective.

Ms Cathy Woodbeck: As indicated on the map of Ontario, the government is proposing a board covering an area of 60,000 square kilometres. For comparison, we have outlined on our map equivalent-sized boards in

southern Ontario. The same-sized board in southern Ontario would stretch from Toronto east to Montreal and extend north to encompass Huntsville and Pembroke. The same-sized board would cover all of southwestern Ontario from Toronto to Windsor, including the Bruce Peninsula.

Imagine, if you will, a five- to six-hour weekend drive to the cottage from Toronto, to an area located 160 kilometres north of North Bay. That is what trustees and administration will be facing weekly in providing leadership to this proposed board. Imagine the diversity of communities one would face if boards in southern Ontario were that size. Well, we face the same type of diversity in proposed district 6 board. This proposed board, the size of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island combined, will contain 10 first nations communities, one city representing 73% of the electorate, three towns representing 6% of the electorate, 15 organized townships representing 16% of the electorate and 121 unorganized townships representing 5% of the electorate, where boards of education currently act as a municipality for election, tax collection and recreation agency purposes. How do you propose to give the above communities a voice in the proposed board, yet allow for representation by population, with a minimum number of trustees?

Imagine trying to hold regularly scheduled public board or committee meetings that encompass five- to six-hour drives on single-lane highways, highways that have been closed 19 times this winter. The easy answer given is telephone or videoconferencing. Try holding a public meeting to close a school by teleconference. The technology is reality but the infrastructure is not available in the north. Hospitals, colleges, universities and school boards need the infrastructure now, not in the promised two to three years. This technology is expensive to install and to operate. A telephone conference for four locations in the proposed district school board 6 costs \$250 per hour. In order to provide reasonable Internet access to our existing rural schools, we are required to set up satellite dishes at each of our 11 schools, at a cost of between \$7,000 and \$10,000 each.

Education and Training Minister John Snobelen has said, "There will be no second-class students in Ontario." Absolutely a noble goal, but one that comes with a price. To fulfil this promise, one of two things will occur in district school board 6: Costs will rise or students will see a dramatic decrease in services and programs. The Minister of Education and Training has not defined what a first-class education system will be or what that will cost. We would assume that equity of access is an essential component of any public education system and that a child in Manitouwadge should expect the same level of service as a child in Thunder Bay. Is the government prepared to fund an equitable system?

Currently, each school board makes its decisions on service levels and supports those decisions by realigning priorities within a board, reallocating resources and taxing where required. Trustees are held accountable to the public every three years. The proposed funding model and this amalgamation diminish the ability of trustees to make decisions that serve the needs of the community.

How do school councils get equal opportunities to make presentations and influence a board's strategic

direction, operational plans and annual budgets in a board of this size? Currently, our school councils and public provide significant ideas in these areas. How does a board grant weight to a small community school 400 kilometres from its population centre?

Ms Labine: Bill 104 is incomplete and does not provide boards with a funding model, methods of dealing with the harmonizing of collective agreements, capital or contingency issues. This is not effective legislation. It presents more problems than solutions.

In Bill 104's preamble, the word "effectiveness" is used. The Lakehead Board of Education's focus has been efficiency and improving school effectiveness and accountability. Since 1993, our operating budget has been reduced by \$18 million, to \$108 million. The provincial government has withdrawn 31% in grant support from our children's education. The Lakehead Board of Education has recouped only 6% through local taxes. The remainder has been found through collective agreements, downsizing and increased efficiencies. Due to the current government's restructuring, the Lakehead Board of Education may have to suspend decisions that would have reduced costs by a further \$600,000 to \$700,000 in 1998. Our ability to manage decisions is compromised.

We find it unacceptable that the Education Improvement Commission, an unelected, unaccountable body, supersedes the authority of a duly elected board. This legislation is an affront to all citizens who cast a ballot in the 1994 municipal election. As with many of this government's directions, a complete disdain for democracy is once again evident. The demographics of Mr Harris's Ontario are very different from Mr Klein's Alberta. Thousands of people are outraged by this government's hateful and myopic agenda. This legislation has absolutely nothing to do with children and classroom learning. It has everything to do with an ambitious agenda to find dollars and to download costs to the municipal taxpayers. The people of Ontario are not stupid. The propaganda will work only so long.

Perhaps the most distressing part of this agenda is the total lack of implementation plans for these massive changes. The big concepts are there, but the how-to details are nowhere to be seen. Bill 104 has taken the focus away from our students. The Conservative government is removing the people who could implement academic accountability. We view the commission and local committees as an added layer of bureaucracy. The legislation's bold language placing the Education Improvement Commission above courts of law and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act is most offensive. As a Canadian and the daughter of a Second World War veteran, I am alarmed, ashamed and embarrassed by this legislation's disregard for the basic tenets of democracy.

In addition, Bill 104 does not recognize the cost, complexity and time frame dictated by this legislation. Boards cannot absorb these costs without impacting our students. Bill 104 will not improve student learning. I'd like you to listen to this: A reformed school board structure which included board amalgamations where they made sense, reduced numbers of trustees, a recognition of efficient boards, sanctions against wasteful boards and shared services wherever possible would have done the job. We

believe the amalgamation of district school board number 6 will be less accountable, less effective, and will impede our ability to provide a high-quality education to our students. The Sweeney and Crombie reports both recognized the uniqueness of northwestern Ontario. We ask you to do the same.

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The four boards of proposed district school board number 6 have already submitted a proposal to create two public boards for the area. A shared services agency and a children's services agreement will deliver cost efficiencies and preserve local accountability and decision-making for these two boards.

Bill 104 creates distraction, uncertainty and challenges in Ontario that will take years to resolve. The strategic direction for the Lakehead Board of Education has and will continue to be improving student learning through school improvement teams and school councils. Our focus has been on improving public accountability, improving practices for special needs students, improving teaching and assessment practices, accelerating the integration of information technology in the classroom and improving facilities for learning. The amalgamation of boards will impede the momentum for continuous improvement established by this board and focus our attention for the next one to two years away from the classroom.

Our concerns must be heard. Bill 104 must be amended to reflect what is best for Ontario's students. Do not push forward with legislation that is unaccountable, ineffective and does nothing to improve the quality of learning.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Labine, to you and your group for being here to present the views of the Lakehead Board of Education. You've used up all of your time. Thank you for coming.

Mr Wildman: I have a question for the parliamentary assistant. Similar to the suggestion that was made in Ottawa yesterday by various boards there with regard to the proposed board in eastern Ontario that would combine Lanark; Leeds-Grenville; Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry; and Prescott and Russell into one board, in contravention of the Sweeney recommendation that there be two boards in that area, I'm asking if this proposal here by the Lakehead board will be responded to by the ministry. That is, if they intend to proceed with amalgamations, will they at least pay attention to the Sweeney and Crombie reports and set up two boards rather than the one board in this very, very large and sparsely populated area outside Thunder Bay?

Mr Skarica: As indicated yesterday, the concerns we hear during the committee hearings will be taken back and the actual board boundaries aren't written in stone at this time.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, if I may, I was going to request some information to be tabled for the committee. I think it would be helpful. I have the information in front of me. We've just begun to hear from a large number of boards over a large geographic area and I thought it might be helpful for the committee to have the maps from the Sweeney task force on school board reduction in front of them. I have them here.

Just for the record, though, the Sweeney recommendation was actually for three. It's five boards overall in northwestern Ontario, as opposed to two, so that would actually be one more than the Lakehead board just presented. I'm not suggesting this is an ideal model, but it is an alternative and it would present for the committee members some sense of the geography and the groupings of the boards. It might be helpful to have that as the day goes on.

Mr Wildman: That map is different from the one Mr Snobelen provided when he made his announcement.

Mrs McLeod: I would think so.

The Chair: If you could give that to the clerk, we'll arrange for distribution during the course of the day.

Mrs McLeod: I've also provided the separate board map, because in the case of separate boards the Sweeney report recommended four rather than the recommendation.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION, THUNDER BAY DISTRICT

The Chair: I call on the next group to come forward, the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, Thunder Bay district, Jim Green. Thank you for your patience. We're looking forward to hearing the views of your organization. You have 15 minutes.

Mr Jim Green: It's a pleasure to be here. I must mention that the government MPPs look very dapper this afternoon.

Mr Wildman: What have you got against us?

Mr Green: As a teacher, I always feel that no matter how unacceptable the behaviour of a student is, you ought to say something nice when you start.

The Chair: Just for the record, Mr Green, the rest of us take exception.

Mr Green: The introduction of Bill 104, ostensibly as another improvement to education and expenditure reduction, is a rather questionable measure. The government's own consultants have said maybe \$150 million, probably less, will be saved. The Thunder Bay district of OPSTF does not have a position against the amalgamation of school boards, but we question the logic and the basis for the government's proposed drastic reduction. We believe this legislation will drastically affect a trustee's ability to do anything with or for the education of their constituents.

Just on a small aside, this government has established a testing process for students on the basis that if you test students long enough, they'll learn something. If these people were farmers, they'd weigh their pigs to fatten them.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): You should be a comedian.

Mr Green: That's one of the roles of a teacher, to keep the children interested.

The Chair: Excuse me, gentlemen. Mr Green is entitled to make his presentation without interruption.

The northwestern Ontario school boards: The viability of such vast school boards is really not there. It's difficult to imagine how boards under these circumstances will be able to hold meetings within reasonable distances for

trustees and for other citizens who wish to participate and monitor school boards.

Looking at the proposed Lakehead board, or whatever we're calling it, area 6, no matter where you hold the meetings, some trustees and citizens are looking at approximately five hours' travel. It's not reasonable to expect a trustee to do that, but it's totally unreasonable to expect a citizen to give up two days of their employment to travel one day, attend a meeting, pay for overnight accommodations and then travel back home for another day. This vast size is going to significantly hinder citizens from exercising their democratic right to participate in local school board decisions. It's a bad decision.

This government has learned well from history. Canadians are a kind, gentle people. They have great respect for their governments, aside from the expected and accepted campaign fantasy promises. We expect our governments to institute policies which provide for the needs of all of our citizens. Canada is a great country that is concerned with people, not money. As we've seen, those who place money ahead of people have mostly moved to the United States. In Canada we believe it's our duty to help those who are less fortunate, while in the United States the less fortunate are viewed as just one more opportunity to make money. This government is taking us in the American direction.

Governments in other countries have used the big lie to implement undemocratic reforms. History shows that if a government tells the big lie loud enough, long enough and often enough, people will accept it as the truth. The Conservative government in Ontario is using the deficit as the basis for its big lie. The government has used this technique to convince citizens that they are simply taxpayers who desperately want the deficit reduced.

On this basis, the government has proclaimed that medical, social and educational services are broken and drastic actions are required to fix the problems. The government has said it so loud, so often, that not only do the people believe, but the government now believes its own lies. The reality is that this government is re-allocating Ontario's wealth and concentrating it in the hands of corporations and the wealthy. The government is removing services from the majority of the citizens of Ontario in order to give tax breaks to corporations and the wealthiest among us.

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A quick study of our neighbours to the south reveals that where money rules and people are not valued, chaos prevails. When the youth of the nation cannot afford a quality education, hopelessness arises. The youth rapidly become disillusioned and hostile to the establishment. Since society obviously does not value them, they value neither themselves nor society. That crime and violence are rampant in inner-city settings is not surprising. By establishing a two-tiered educational system and thus making needed education services and opportunities available only to those with money, we are condemning ourselves to a more violent and less productive society. Although business may save tax dollars now, the lack of an educated, flexible worker will impair its future

competitiveness. This fixation upon the tax dollar at the expense of people is dooming our youth to despair and our country to mediocrity.

Past actions of this government have not made education more efficient; they have merely taken badly needed finances away from the children in order to finance the tax cut. This reorganization of school boards is not intended to improve education but is again part of a scheme to transfer tax dollars to the rich. In combination with other legislation, taxing powers are being removed from school boards and the vacated taxing room given to municipalities. Financial responsibilities in excess of the new tax area are being transferred to the municipalities. This will inevitably require huge tax increases to maintain the services or, as this government seems to favour, elimination of the services so that private industry can make a buck. The net saving to the provincial coffers will again be part of the wealth transferred to those who need it least.

In addition to the restrictions placed upon citizen participation in local school boards by the vast distances decreed for northern boards, the legislation proposes further unnecessary restrictions on citizens. There is little need for school board employees to be restricted from serving on school boards other than the one for which they work. There is absolutely no reason to exclude spouses of school board employees from participating as trustees. Interestingly, the legislation does not address the case where spouses have distinctly separate lives. A citizen serving as a trustee would be forced to resign their position of trustee if their spouse, even though living far apart, should obtain employment with any school board in Ontario. The current conflict-of-interest legislation I think adequately deals with the situation.

Bill 104 fails to make adequate provision for the employees of current school boards. The ruminations of an appointed band whose decisions cannot be appealed to a court of law will decide the fate of employees and their collective agreements. This is not democratic. This is not acceptable.

There are no successor provisions for collective agreements negotiated with current boards contained within the legislation. There are no specific provisions, other than of course this unappealing commission, for transferring employees from the current school boards to the new ones. There is no obligation in this legislation for the new boards to accept the current collective agreements negotiated by the current boards and their employees. There is every opportunity for current employees to be treated in an arbitrary and capricious manner by the new boards and the commission.

Because of the vast distances in proposed northern boards, transfers can be unnecessarily punitive. Transfers of principals and vice-principals can be traumatic enough within the current boards. The potential for such trauma within the new boards is incalculable. The legislation must be amended to include clauses creating a reasonable and just process for transferring employees and their collective agreements to the new boards. Additional clauses must address the issue of transfers other than those initiated by mutual consent.

I have six recommendations:

That the vast areas of northern boards be reduced to improve the ability of citizens to participate in the democratic process.

That trustee salaries remain the responsibility of trustees, subject to local accountability.

That Bill 104 be amended by the deletion of the clauses which unduly restrict the rights of some citizens to participate as school board trustees.

That Bill 104 be amended to address human resource issues, including, but not limited to, job protection for all employees of existing boards, recognition of the legal status of current collective agreements, protection for existing employees from transfers beyond the boundaries of their current boards, and successor rights for current unions and federations.

That Bill 104 adopt the principles related to employee transfer as outlined by the Ontario Teachers' Federation. I have attached that as an appendix.

That Bill 104 be amended to remove any role for the Education Improvement Commission related to the outsourcing of non-instructional services.

Thank you for this opportunity.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Green. You've exhausted all of the time we had for you. I'd like to thank you for your presentation and for being here today.

I'd ask to have the Fort Frances-Rainy River Board of Education come forward please.

Interjection.

The Chair: Oh, yes.

Mrs McLeod: So there are several boards, then?

The Chair: My apologies. Yes, of course: John McLeod; Dryden Board of Education, Murray McFayden; Kenora Board of Education, Marion Helash.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, now that there's substantially more time, they may prefer to present separately.

The Chair: I don't see them here at all, so until they arrive we can't make any decision.

Mr Wildman: This demonstrates how long it takes to travel.

The Chair: We've noticed. Ms McLeod, did you have something else to add?

Mrs McLeod: We are running ahead of time because of the fact that we've altered the schedule.

The Chair: Absolutely. I understand that.

Mrs McLeod: As a point of information, before this grouping of boards comes up, I didn't know whether it would be helpful to make sure that people have the Bill 104 maps on northern Ontario, or if we can assume that they're —

The Chair: They're being reproduced.

Mrs McLeod: Those are the Sweeney ones, but these are the ones that were given to the committee in Ottawa yesterday that were part of our package. Just to be sure people have them.

The Chair: I'm assuming everyone does. If someone does not, could you please inform the clerk. While we have a few minutes, perhaps I'll ask our researcher to introduce two documents.

Mr Ted Glenn: There have been distributed two memos in response to the questions tabled with me yesterday: the first, Mr Wildman's request for a synopsis

of the school councils' presentations to the committee on their existing legislative authority, and the other one on Ms McLeod's request for information on committee members' expressed opposition to the proposed role for school councils in the hearings to date. If you have any questions about the memos, you can get in touch with me directly.

Mrs McLeod: While we're waiting, I also table for the committee a brief that has been presented in written form for the committee's consideration. Unfortunately, it wasn't possible to get this group on as presenters, but it's a presentation by five retired education officers of the northwestern regional office of the Ontario Ministry of Education. I want it on the record that they've made this submission.

The Chair: We'll arrange for distribution of the document. We're waiting for the clerk.

Mr Skarica: While we're tabling documentation, I have a presentation to the committee of parliamentary hearings on Bill 104 from Peter Zandstra.

The Chair: We'll arrange for copying and distribution of that as well.

Perhaps, while we wait for the various groups to arrive, we might move on. Is the Office and Professional Employees International Union here? No.

1300

LINDA RYDHOLM

PAUL KENNEDY

RENNY MAKI

The Chair: Could I call upon, then, Linda Rydholm, Renny Maki and Paul Kennedy. Thank you very much for being with us. I know there have been some changes in the schedule. We appreciate your being here and accommodating the committee and accommodating the other boards that would otherwise not be able to present without your concession.

Dr Linda Rydholm: Madam Chair, members of the committee, good afternoon. Coming from the Crombie panel, I had hoped to do a speech this afternoon showing you the linkages. However, I've been told on very short notice, just now, that I am not able to do that. Evidently, members of the subcommittee — at least the majority, Lyn McLeod and Bud Wildman — didn't want to hear that, so I will do my best and then my counterparts will get to say their little piece.

The Chair: In fairness, there was unanimous consent. It was discussed here at the hearings in the morning. There's no one individual member who is responsible for this decision.

Dr Rydholm: Anyway, we'll do the best we can.

"It takes the whole village to raise a child," or, "It takes the whole village to educate a child," says an often-quoted and sometimes slightly reworded African proverb — the whole village to raise or educate a child. Unfortunately in Ontario's education system the villagers have not always known their role, or if knowing, the villagers have not always assumed their role, have not always been held accountable for their role for a variety of reasons.

Today I would like to share with you a number of personal experiences, frustrations and observations which

over the years have come my way in the different roles that I have played in Ontario's system of education. As a student, teacher, parent, school trustee and member of the education subpanel, Crombie commission, also known as the Who Does What panel, I've seen a lot. Notice that my comments focus on learning. I will précis quickly as I go here.

As a student attending Ontario schools in the 1950s and 1960s, I was conscientious and successful. I had good parents, teachers who followed a set curriculum. My fellow students went to work full-time in their late teens. A few of us went on to college and university. The system worked adequately for the baby-boomer times.

As an elementary teacher in the 1970s, I saw a loosening of curriculum standards, testing and reporting. Some teachers and parents were concerned about the trend to open-concept schools and anecdotal report cards. More help was given to children with special learning needs. Everyone had to get through the system. A formal education became more important, in fact essential, for securing a job.

As parents, while my husband and I studied for our doctorates in the United States from 1980 to 1984, our two children started their school careers. As former teachers from Ontario, we were worried that our daughter and son would fall behind the kids back home, but fortunately we found an excellent public school where responsibilities for everyone were clearly defined. As parents, we definitely felt part of the education picture. Every six weeks an outline of the upcoming curriculum was sent home. Appropriate homework assignments, even in kindergarten, were done each week by the students and signed by the parents.

Our daughter and son unfortunately did not finish their education in the States. They came home to Thunder Bay. Instead of falling behind the students, as we had thought would happen, our children were so far ahead academically that they couldn't fit into the regular classes. They skipped grades in school. Very sadly, their early attitude towards learning and pride in academic achievement depreciated. Every once in a while an industrious teacher would inspire them, but generally through the years they learned that bright students did not have to do their work carefully to get high marks. As parents of students in the system, and as former teachers, we felt that there were low expectations from the school system.

In 1988, I was elected as a school trustee to the Lakehead Board of Education. As a trustee I've been chair of many committees and chair of the board. Again, I have felt the lack of establishing learning standards and the testing thereof. Although we had a number of reform-minded trustees on the board, it was very difficult to make any changes academically. To its credit, the Lakehead board joined with a few southern boards to form a learning consortium. The consortium has done some testing in reading, writing and mathematics, a function that the Ministry of Education should have been performing province-wide. Gradually over the next few years, though, through the EQAO, Ontario should see a sharpened focus on learning and the testing of that learning.

In 1996, I was appointed as a member of the education subpanel on the Who Does What panel, the Crombie

commission. We established five principles for change: quality of education, equity for students and taxpayers, affordability, accountability and responsiveness to local needs. The subpanel made many recommendations for the province and for school boards and school councils. One can refer to page 52 to see those recommendations.

The subpanel recommended reduction in the number of school boards, observance of French-language and Catholic rights and increased cooperation with municipalities. Very importantly, the subpanel advised the province to assume an increased share of the funding for education. Reform of education funding had been previously recommended by some 12 different studies over the course of 10 years, but reform had not been attempted, and for a good reason: Funding of our school system is very complex and is directly related to the governance. Funding and governance are intertwined and are very sensitive to reform. However, the subpanel recognized that to ensure quality, equitable and affordable public education across Ontario, the province would have to somehow assume the funding. Whether it is with a tax swap, pooling or whatever, the province must take charge of education finance in order to be fair to all students and all taxpayers.

One fact has become very clear to me from my experience as a student, teacher, parent, school trustee and a member of the Who Does What education subpanel: New education funding and governance models must enable, indeed require, the participants, or the villagers, in Ontario's education system to be responsible and accountable to themselves, to one another, to the government, and ultimately to society. It is from this background that I consider Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, 1997. The bill deals only with part of the change, the governance. There will be new types of district school boards, fewer boards, fewer trustees. Changes will be significant.

Probably the majority of people in Ontario and the majority of people in government would prefer to see one publicly funded system of education. However, after much study and discussion on the issue, I understand why the government is establishing the four different types of district school boards: to satisfy constitutional and charter rights. Canadian democracy sometimes serves the rights of some individuals or minorities over the wishes, even the betterment, of the majority.

Specifically in my area, the proposed district 6 will encompass four boards. It will be very large. Administratively it should work, it should save costs. The classroom should not be harmed; the classroom should be enhanced. Think of these in two different ways: administratively and politically. Politically, if the trustee role is decreased to mostly policymaking, the large district will work. However, if trustees continue as pseudo-administrators, serving on contract negotiations, sports, program committees etc, then a large district will be very difficult to serve. Perhaps a compromise can be achieved: two boards politically, with a shared services agreement administratively. I agree with the changes regarding trustees.

The Education Improvement Commission will be a necessary vehicle to oversee the transition of the old system to the new. The list of powers and responsibilities may seem somewhat extreme, but necessary, in my

opinion. I think back to the 1970 amalgamation in Thunder Bay, when the two cities and the surrounding municipalities did some strange things, when no one was directly in charge here and making sure things would happen properly.

Remembering that Bill 104 is only a part of the promised change in education, it is hoped that the bill will tie in nicely with the new legislation around advisory school councils, contract negotiations and the student allocation formula.

The optimist in me hopes that all the changes will fit together, that within a few years there will be a clearly defined and tested curriculum with appropriate funding, that the standards of education will be so high that there will be no need for parents to cry out for charter schools, that taxpayer groups will no longer criticize high taxes.

The optimist in me hopes that students will aim and achieve high academically; teachers will follow a clearly defined curriculum; parents will know how their children in their particular school are doing and will help with the learning process; community members will be supportive in a variety of ways; trustees and administrators will have a reduced role that is supportive to the classroom; the provincial Education Quality and Accountability Office and Ministry of Education and Training will provide central control for education funding, governance and student learning.

With the help of good legislation, may we all become good villagers who will help to educate our children: The whole village educating the child.

1310

Mr Paul Kennedy: I'm going to offer some of my thoughts. This was never a collaborative effort and we're going in different directions here, but I've got a couple of minutes because I have to leave Mr Maki some time.

I have to comment, and I don't mean to be vexatious, but the Lakehead board's chair pointed out a couple of times very directly that what she was giving you was board policy, and I have to say that what you got was never something that was developed at the board or voted on by the trustees of the board, and for the sake of good order I think you should know that.

I have no problem with the Fewer School Boards Act. I think it's consistent with previous ministries in governments before the one of the day, consistent with reports such as the Sweeney report, consistent with taxpayer and voter desire to downsize government, and consistent with some successful policies implemented in other provinces. It is not conceptually flawed. However, there is always a risk of flaws in implementation and I think that's where the attention has to be paid as we go forward with this legislation.

With regard to the district 6 board, I don't believe the issue is geography, student numbers and trustee representation. I believe the issue is competent management. We are going to add 4,000 students in 11 elementary sites and five secondary sites. I think it's a management issue. I think that the management, from what I've seen across all these boards, is entirely competent to put together a plan to do this.

I'm going to skip over a whole bunch here, some of which has been covered by Trustee Rydholm.

With regard to funding, I believe that in the quest for equity across the province, the funding and right to tax have to be taken out of the hands of local trustees. I say that with some ambivalence because I think the Lakehead board has been among the better, particularly in recent years, with regard to mining the taxes.

However, having said that, the Lakehead board in 1986 raised taxes 7.1%; 1987, 9.3%; 1988, 5.8%; 1989, 10.4%; 1990, 12.4%; 1991, 6.8%, and on it goes. We have to a certain extent abdicated our responsibility to tax in a responsible fashion, so I don't think it's any surprise this right is being taken away from boards across the province.

My main concern is with the funding model, which is the next shoe to drop. We haven't seen that model yet. I'm not comfortable entirely with this process till I do. It costs more to educate in the north. As a matter of fact, it costs more to do everything in the north and we consistently do not have that fact realized.

I think it's incumbent on everyone to make sure the funding model that evolves recognizes higher transportation costs, higher heating costs. These are not simple concepts to grasp and they have to be included as we move forward.

I will leave the rest for Trustee Maki to use the rest of the time.

Mr Renny Maki: Without any further ado, my name is Renny Maki and I represent the ward of Rural North on the Lakehead Board of Education. Most of the municipalities in my ward pay between 60% to 80% of their tax bill to education, so I can say that I represent a bunch of constituents happy with some of the reforms the government is implementing.

I wish to express my support for the overall direction of Bill 104. I don't give my unequivocal support, but I give my overall support and for the other education reforms in general. I believe that Bill 104 complements the other reforms, such as curriculum standards, the implementation of school councils and the removal of the education portion of the property tax.

I am in favour of Bill 104's reduction of the number of school boards. For one, this promises a more uniform and controlled standard of school board spending across the province. Under the current package of reforms, school boards will be required to operate within budgets based on the numbers of students without the irrational increase of taxes that has taken place over the years. The decreased number of boards will also help to ensure a more level playing field when it comes to employee salaries across the province, and this will facilitate any move the province might make towards province-wide bargaining.

In terms of governance, I am also in favour of the move to limit the number of trustees a board can have, and the salaries of trustees. Especially with the new reform package, there is clearly no need for the number of trustees we currently have, especially career trustees, and I say that without bias. I am a career trustee who doesn't have another day job and I'm sure glad for today that is the case, but I won't be running again.

Trustees have traditionally been seen as the ones to formulate and ratify policies for their school boards. In

practice, however, trustees seem to do little more than rubber-stamp decisions that have already been made by the administration. The issues that really count in education, namely, what is being taught in the classroom and how it is being taught, have for many years been an enigma to parents, ratepayers and even trustees.

Nevertheless, there has been a handful of trustees over the years in our board who have gone the extra mile in challenging the education establishment, especially in the areas of finance and education quality. From this, the Lakehead board continues to reap countless benefits to this day. For instance, before the province-wide mandating of school councils, our board had already mandated the creation of school improvement teams in 1994. Our board also has the distinction in leading a consortium of five boards which has undertaken testing initiatives and which is designing province-wide tests for the Education Quality and Accountability office.

These accomplishments have been reached in spite of shrinking budgets and downsized administration throughout the past five years. Clearly, the Lakehead board has demonstrated that meaningful leadership, not more trustees and not more money, has led to a better board.

The reason I mention this is I believe that the number of trustees provided for in Bill 104 leaves ample room for exceptional trustees. Especially now that the province is taking on the responsibility for a standard core curriculum, along with a standard report card and classroom materials, trustees can focus more on overall board policy and not worry about whether or not the three Rs are actually being taught. Plans to establish school councils in legislation give me hope that parents will have a stronger role in this area.

I am pleased that the bill does not eliminate trustees altogether. If there will ever be a change in direction which reverses the current strides to beef up standards, there will remain an avenue by which people can democratically elect trustees who will insist on education quality which exceeds provincial directives. I hope, however, that the current direction will continue.

However, I am quite concerned with the proposed changes to school board boundaries as they pertain to our board. I believe the difficulties in administering and governing such a board will be tremendous. It would be prudent, and more desirable for everyone, if boards are amalgamated with other boards that share common characteristics in population density and student population.

In addition, I'm disappointed with the timing with which these changes were announced. I believe that if our board was given more time, we could come up with agreeable alternatives to the proposed changes. The district 6A-6B proposal was the best consensus we could come up with in such a short period of time. I believe we in the north know what will work best in the north. We could possibly even come up with some agreeable alternative with the neighbouring district 5 board. I ask that you give us a chance to show you.

Based on these observations, I offer the following recommendations: (1) that Bill 104 be amended to allow for one more school board in northwestern Ontario to allow for the amalgamation of boards based on similar

characteristics, reasonable size and efficiency in program delivery; (2) that the boards of the proposed district 5 and district 6 be allowed time to propose a preferred model of amalgamation based on the aforementioned point.

1320

If we cannot have more time, I at least ask that you accept the Lakehead board's 6A-6B proposal as a three-year pilot project, subject to change if outcomes are not met.

In conclusion, I would like to offer the following anecdote which I think really puts this into perspective. A year ago when our board passed a zero tax increase, I said it was the least our board could do. I said there was no reason why a board that spends \$6,000 per student cannot offer a top-notch education to our younger generation, especially when a private school like the Thunder Bay Christian School spends just a little more than \$3,000 a student.

The fact that each family spends \$5,500 a year to send their children to this school, in addition to paying their education tax, testifies that this school offers good education even without the centralized services of a school board to rely on. Several people responded to my comments with: "That's not fair. You can't compare our system to theirs. They do things differently." All I can say is, maybe it's time we did things differently.

I believe Bill 104 takes a large step forward in doing these things more efficiently and responsibly. But what's most important to note in these changes is that there will still be classrooms, there will still be teachers and there will still be students learning, only now they will have a system whose clearer focus makes them the priority.

The Chair: Ms Rydholm, Mr Kennedy and Mr Maki, I want to express on behalf of the committee how much we appreciate your understanding and the concession you've made. We are trying to accommodate a great many people in a very limited time.

I'd like to suggest to you, because I notice you were reading from prepared texts, that you might forward to us the full text of your presentation and we will make sure that it forms part of the official record.

Dr Rydholm: Thank you for the extra time. We notice you did let us go over the 15 minutes.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, I want to clarify the record because Ms Rydholm suggested at the beginning of the presentation that Mr Wildman and I would not have been interested in a presentation on the subcommittee report of the Crombie panel. You clarified the process by which a decision was made to change the order. But I do want to make it absolutely clear that I indeed would have appreciated a very clear presentation on the Crombie recommendations, both on amalgamation and funding and how they differ from the proposals that are before us in this bill.

The Chair: Perhaps Ms Rydholm would include that in the full text when she sends it to us.

Dr Rydholm: I'd be very happy to and I will be around later this afternoon. I've taken the afternoon off out of my clinic, so if people want to speak to me individually, I'll certainly make them welcome.

The Chair: We appreciate very much your generosity this morning.

FORT FRANCES-RAINY RIVER
BOARD OF EDUCATION
DRYDEN BOARD OF EDUCATION
KENORA BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: May I call upon the Fort Frances-Rainy River Board of Education, John McLeod; Dryden Board of Education, Murray McFayden; and the Kenora Board of Education, Marion Helash. Thank you very much for being here. We met this morning as a committee and rearranged our schedule through the generosity of some other participants and you have half an hour to make your presentation. If there is any time, the committee will ask you questions.

Ms Marion Helash: I'm Marion Helash and I'm the chair of the Kenora Board of Education. I have with me Wilma Sletmoen, who is the chair of the Fort Frances-Rainy River Board of Education, and Dave Penney, the chair of the Dryden Board of Education.

The boards of education remain committed to the ideology that forced amalgamation is irresponsible and contradicts the principles of local autonomy and therefore the democratic rights of the community and its constituents.

Even this consultation process has not allowed us the courtesy of standing together, even though the government has forced us into amalgamation. We have, however, invited Atikokan to join us in this presentation and appreciate successful efforts that allow Atikokan a place and an increase in our time, and we thank you.

The present government has chosen to ignore these basic rights and, under Bill 104, caused a forced amalgamation of school boards. For northern boards, the amalgamation has been particularly harsh and unreasonable. To create one board, district school board 5, out of five, and I think mathematically that's less than half, across an area greater than the entire country of France, and with differing time zones, would seem ludicrous to most rational thinkers. Any reasonable and responsible effort on the part of the consultation team to address this particularly absurd proposal would certainly be viewed by most as totally appropriate. Possible recommendations on your part should address the following factors.

Mr David Penney: Recommendation 1: Reduction of bureaucrats and politicians. Northern trustees are presently underpaid and overworked. In most communities, travel is already required to get to board meetings and the remuneration is generally less than \$5,000. Our trustees represent a valued and cost-effective resource to education.

Similarly, administration has already been restructured to a bare minimum to meet the needs of the presently spread-out board jurisdictions. If savings are the government's goal, the boards of education cannot see where there are further savings in the amalgamation of the five boards, particularly in administrative functions. Trustees may be reduced, but the out-of-pocket expenses will increase, therefore with no realization of savings.

Recommendation 2: Local control of education. Property taxation to support education not only demonstrates local autonomy, but also affects accountability. By removing local control, communities no longer have a direct say in their child's education. With no tax-raising

power, and funding being on a provincial level, will not budget development and collective bargaining, for instance, be meaningless exercises at the board level? Some school council members expressed the worry that (a) they will be expected to fulfil a role far beyond what they intended or in which they feel competent or interested; and (b) they want the decision-making to remain local, not vested in Toronto. The government must reconsider their decision and allow boards to remain with property tax as their measure of accountability.

Recommendation 3: Significant barriers to amalgamation. As mentioned earlier, the basic geography of the proposed district school board 5 is enormous. In southern Ontario terms, our board would extend from downtown Toronto, west into Michigan, past Windsor and north to Sudbury.

I want to show you a map that demonstrates school board district 5. This is school board district 5 as it appears in northern Ontario as per the current recommendation. On the flipside of the map of Ontario, drawn to scale is school board district 5 if it were in southern Ontario, and just by comparison it extends from North Bay down approximately to Port Colborne, over on the far side of Peterborough and approximately to London. This is drawn to scale.

This map clearly reflects the enormity of the problem. Why wouldn't the government consider the same treatment for those communities that we have identified in southern Ontario? Size can't be the answer as small isolated boards with a handful of students have been left untouched in the amalgamation.

Not only is distance a problem, but travel can be very dangerous as most roads are secondary highways, sometimes treacherous in the winter, with hundreds of wood-hauling trucks to keep you company. On top of this, our climate is far more severe with minus 30 degrees Celsius the norm in winter. We know all of this because all of us in our existing boards already travel up to 150 kilometres or more to attend board meetings or other administrative meetings. In the new board, travel could increase to over six hours one way by road in good weather to get to a meeting. Air service is not available to most communities in northwestern Ontario.

Technological infrastructures are not adequate. In many communities analog telephone lines are still the mode and, believe it or not, party lines are still in operation in some areas. Cellular phones are not even available in most communities. It is obvious that technology will at best be a partial solution to the geographic impediments of the proposed district school board 5.

While geography poses an incredible impediment to a one-board approach to public education in northwestern Ontario, clearly Bill 104 failed to recognize the long-standing affiliations among our 50 first nations communities and five public school boards. There exist two major native cultures in northwestern Ontario, the Cree and the Ojibway, with various subgroups within these cultures. Treaty 9 first nations are located north of Highway 17 to Hudson Bay. Treaty 3 first nations are found mainly along the Highway 11 corridor. While both groups share many things in common, they are two fundamentally distinct cultures.

1330

Clearly a two-board structure that utilizes the two major corridors of the region will help protect the positive relationships that exist between public boards and first nations. A single-board model promotes a generic melting-pot approach to its affairs with two very different groups of first nations.

Another issue that has come to northern boards is the unorganized areas. Boards have collected taxes from these areas and in turn provided education for their children.

It is not uncommon in northern boards to have children come to school in many unique modes of transportation. Our children use snow machines in the winter and boats in the summer. Some travel 60 miles or more each way to school every day.

Recommendation 4: Trusteeship. The minister says that boards will be returned to their roles as guardians of education. We would like a precise and reliable definition of this term, since presumably it will dictate the mandate of school boards in the future. The Kenora Board of Education, for instance, has had a student trustee for years. A huge board with meetings being held all around virtually prohibits students being at the local board table. For boards, the immense challenge will be to attract individuals to run as trustees who have the time and the flexibility to meet the duties of a trustee. A half-day meeting translates into two days, with overnight accommodation usually required. Will a young parent or a single mother be able to make this commitment?

It is our understanding that trustee numbers are to be calculated using a formula that addresses representation by population and a density factor based on population per square mile. We also understand that the areas being used in this calculation are the current boundaries of the existing boards. Large portions of northwestern Ontario currently are not in an existing board but are being provided educational services by existing boards. In fact, boards in the proposed school district number 5 have in the past couple of years applied for boundary expansion to cover their existing service area. Trustee numbers must take into consideration the service area of existing boards in the northwest and not just current board boundaries.

Trustee representation will be a significant barrier, as many areas could be without representation due to the density of their population. Trustees in southern Ontario will have the capacity to meet face to face at all times. For northern trustees this will probably not be possible, unless at great expense. Your very presence here today illustrates how important a face-to-face meeting is in certain circumstances.

Recommendation 5: Transition period to amalgamation. Our greatest enemy to a smooth transition is time. January 1, 1998, is rapidly approaching and no clear direction is being given to us by the government. In addition, significant costs for the transition must be the responsibility of the government. Travel alone will be costly for northern boards, to say nothing about accommodation, staff costs, and the list goes on.

Recommendation 6: Powers of the Education Improvement Commission. We can understand the necessity of a body to coordinate the enormous amount of change

taking place, and presumably the EIC will help make the whole process smoother. However, we have major problems in principle with a body that is not elected having the sweeping powers that the EIC has been granted when they are controlling our children's education and also tax dollars taken from every one of us. We would strongly recommend that this commission's power of amendment over 1997 board budgets be removed and that they not be allowed to be exempt from court challenge.

Mrs Wilma Sletmoen: Recommendation 7: Human resources. We believe adequate provisions must be in place to ensure our staff are treated fairly and job loss will not occur outside of normal attrition. We must keep our expertise within our board to ensure our students' and board's needs are being met. All staff issues should be addressed by the local education improvement committees.

Recommendation 8: Curriculum and program issues. All of the government rhetoric is around efficiency and accountability, but no research has been done to ensure that this is in the best interests of the children. All boards have local programs that best serve the needs of their children. For example, Atikokan board respects the outdoor education program as a local requirement of their parents and community. If we fail our children, we have not done our job. We are prepared to do what has to be done and we will do it well, as we have done in the past. We stand committed to respect the uniqueness of each of our boards. Safeguards must be put in place by the government to recognize problems as they occur and react immediately if they are a threat to the quality of education being offered to our students.

Recommendation 9: Funding. Future funding models must be cognizant of the needs of boards, such as proposed district school board number 5. We are greatly concerned about the recent capital allocations and the lack of direction in ensuring that the future needs of our children will not be adversely affected by underfunding by the government. Variables must first meet the needs of the students, but should also recognize differing administrative needs across the province. These needs include recognition of capital liabilities for boards with small student populations and a unique management structure to accommodate the vast geography. Consultation on funding must be prepared to be cooperative and reactive with participants.

In conclusion, we are not presenting here to rally support for the status quo. Change is inevitable and in many cases necessary. However, what is happening now is a huge, all-encompassing revolution in education in Ontario which will affect our children's future for many years to come. These changes need to be made carefully, with forethought and planning and a clear vision of what education in Ontario can and should be. At present, we are not confident that this is the case.

We strongly urge that this legislation be re-examined and amended accordingly. Therefore, the following recommendations are submitted.

(1) Due to the low-density population, a formula for representation may be prohibitive to northern boards. It is our recommendation that the proposed district school

board number 5 have adequate trustee representation to address the immense geography. Flexibility should be ensured through regulation to ensure that trustee representation is greater than the minimum five, probably 12 trustees or more, and that the density factor used to determine trustee numbers takes into consideration the entire area served by existing boards.

(2) For the reasons previously stated, one board west of Thunder Bay is totally impractical. The government must correct this situation. Our recommendation: the government change the boundaries of proposed district school board number 5 to create at least two boards. The two-board structure would have the Kenora Board of Education, Dryden Board of Education and Red Lake Board of Education together as one board, and the Fort Frances-Rainy River and Atikokan boards of education as the other new board. All five boards have unanimously agreed to this proposal.

(3) Trustee representation must include a representative for native students. The geography of the board must be a consideration. Our recommendation: that through regulation a trustee representing native students should be recognized in addition to the elected trustees of the board.

(4) Local education improvement committees represented by the existing boards are in the best position to make decisions for the new board up to January 1998. These decisions should include, but not be limited to, restructuring of staff, including the new board's senior administrative staff; program needs; and restructuring of operations, including outsourcing.

We are concerned about the sweeping powers given to the Education Improvement Commission under Bill 104. We find it peculiar that a non-elected body that is accountable to no one is given power to change, eliminate or modify decisions made by an elected body that is accountable to its electorate. A similar scenario would be myself and four or five of my peers having the authority to overrule decisions made by the Legislature.

Mr Wildman: That wouldn't be a bad idea.

Mrs Sletmoen: Our recommendation: that Bill 104 be written to ensure local education improvement committees have decision-making power and include trustees from all existing boards.

(5) The transition period must be flexible to provide for a smooth flow of operations, restructuring of staff and careful planning. A bare minimum of the new board structure should be outlined for January 1, 1998, with the remainder to occur during the next year or two. Our recommendation: that extended time lines with clear direction be provided to existing boards and the local education improvement committee to assist them with planning.

(6) Transition costs will be a burden on small northern boards. We already operate our board functions at levels much lower than most other boards in the province. Our recommendation is that financial assistance over and above the normal grants be provided to cover transition costs, including a salary for a coordinator, travel, accommodation and out-of-pocket expenses for members of the local education improvement committee.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: We have approximately three minutes per caucus. We begin with the government caucus.

1340

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): Thank you very much for your presentation. You painted an interesting picture of the size geographically. I liked a couple of the points you made in your presentation, and you spoke briefly of different ways of the students getting to their schools. I thought it was quite interesting, as a person who is from the south, and to have that enunciated makes it that much more important, to show the diversity or different approaches here in the north.

You also mentioned, I think in recommendation 8, the curriculum issue, the outdoors education program. I want to ask two questions if I may. Could you perhaps explain to me, is that program in respect to living in the north and the incumbent knowledge you should have about the outdoors and the way it is out here, or is it specific to the survival mode? What is that exactly, that course?

Ms Helash: If I could answer that on Atikokan's behalf, because it's Atikokan that particularly —

Mr O'Toole: Yes, I noticed.

Ms Helash: They may probably well address it to you this evening. We also run an outdoor education program, which really includes both the idea of survival —

Mr O'Toole: Is it a curriculum-based course with a credit? That's what I'm interested in.

Ms Helash: Yes.

Mr O'Toole: It is. Okay, that's quite interesting. I think that's very important given the fact of the geography and the different approaches and the lack of necessity of having a cookie-cutter answer to everything.

Mr Wildman: Considering the distances the trustees will have to travel.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Mr Wildman. You'll have a question later. I'll share part of your time.

The other one is, looking at the map, we have copies of the current boards and the proposed new arrangement of the number 5 and number 6 areas. In my view, today it must be a problem in some of the areas for travel for board meetings. My question is this: Are the trustees paid for all of their out-of-pocket expenses like mileage, hotels and all of those things, and is it part of the overall cost per student?

Mr Penney: If I can respond to that, it is part of the overall cost per student. We are indeed reimbursed for mileage and for meals and hotel rooms.

Mr O'Toole: You said something in the order of \$5,000. I don't mean this to be critical, by the way; I have been a school trustee myself in the south, and they make a bit more. But how much would an average trustee spend on expenses in a given calendar year?

Mr Penney: Speaking for the Dryden board, because I'm not sure of what the actual expenses would be for some of the other boards in the northwest —

Mr O'Toole: Just an average.

Mr Penney: Speaking for the Dryden board, an average expense per month for trustees, excluding the summer months, would be somewhere in the neighbourhood of about \$250 to \$300.

Mr O'Toole: That's hotel and mileage?

Mr Penney: Right. There are very few hotel rooms required, certainly an awful lot of mileage. As chair of the Dryden board and someone who has been chair of the

Dryden board for eight out of somewhere in the neighbourhood of about the last 10 years, I can tell you that I have put on well over 350,000 kilometres and gone through three vehicles just travelling to board meetings.

Mr O'Toole: I can believe it. Thank you very much.

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): Thank you for your presentation. When I take a look at the number of uniquenesses that you outlined in the presentation — you talk about the Kenora Board of Education student trustee, which I think was a great step forward in terms of boards asking for students to become part of their membership in terms of trusteeship. You talk about the young parent, the single mother and the impracticality, I guess, of them becoming a trustee of the board of education. In terms of the scenario that the government has put forth so far, who do you actually see as being people who would want to take on the role of a trustee in a board of that size?

Ms Helash: I don't know if one thing could really be the answer to it, except people who may have to be responsible, people who have some independent wealth, people who are retired, unless there were two-parent families where it was possible for one parent to remain at home, that type of circumstance. I think it would eliminate people who really want to. I've lost a day's pay to come here today.

Mrs Sletmoen: If I could just add a little bit to that, I think that we see in the Fort Frances board, in our board, our existing honorarium, which is our basic monthly honorarium, if you will, which is well below \$5,000, as a means to afford everyone the opportunity to serve on a board who wishes to, because they could not afford to do so if they didn't have some compensation, not as a salary, and certainly we would have the same concerns with finding people who are physically able to run for a new board, who would be able to manage the distances and time commitment and who would see the role of a trustee as being meaningful in the new scenario.

Mr Miclash: I guess what you're telling me then is that the representation wouldn't reflect the younger people in the classroom, like a wide variety of the number of people we have; you mentioned native students, students of single parents. So in essence what you're saying is that that trusteeship would not reflect the students in the classroom?

Mrs Sletmoen: That's certainly our belief right now.

Mr Hampton: A couple of questions. As you know, Bill 104 has in it no provision for aboriginal representation on a board of education. By my estimates, there would be about 10,000 Ojibway people within this proposed district 5 board and in excess of 10,000 Cree people who would use the services of this board. What do you foresee happening if there is no provision for representation of the Ojibway and Cree people? What do you foresee happening in terms of your local boards, local schools etc?

Mr Penney: I think one of the things that is more than likely going to happen or that could happen — of course, we're speculating a bit here — is that you're going to see more and more of those particular students being moved into schools in other areas where perhaps they have got some sort of representation. At the current time, I think a good example, for instance, is that in some of the

schools within the Dryden board we have a lot of students from the north who are coming down to our high schools, and should we lose that, there is the danger of some of those high schools being in jeopardy of being able to support themselves. In other words, we may not have the student population there any longer in order to keep the high school open.

Mr Hampton: So it's fair to say that many of the schools in your respective communities, in terms of having a school population, are dependent upon cooperation and cohesion with native communities?

Mr Penney: Very much so, yes.

Ms Sletmoen: Absolutely.

Mr O'Toole: Chair, for the purpose of the record, I don't particularly agree with Mr Hampton. Section 327, subsection (3), I believe it is, referring to subsection (7), does make reference to the appointment of first nations representation, so it would be wrong to leave the impression with those listening today that no provision whatsoever was made for representation of first nations. For the record, I clarify it. It's very important, and I agree with the sentiment he is bringing up, but it does make provisions within the current bill.

The Chair: I'll take that as a point of information, not clarification of the record.

Mr Wildman: On the point, Mr O'Toole is correct. There is reference to the appointment of first nations people, but there is nothing in the bill as currently drafted that responds to the concerns raised by the deputants here; that is, that there is provision for one first nations representative on a board. If you have a significant number of Ojibway communities, some of whom have significant differences, and you have a significant number of Cree communities, some of whom have significant differences, and the two of them have significant differences overall, how are you going to accommodate this? It isn't in the bill, and that's the problem. We certainly want to ensure proper aboriginal representation so that they can have proper input and say over the education of their children. At the same time, we don't want boards swamped by a very large number of communities demanding representation, even though we understand why they would want to have that representation. When we asked for clarification on this when we were briefed by the ministry officials, they hadn't figured it out and they hadn't thought about it. They didn't know what to do about it.

The Chair: Thank you to all of you for being here today representing the concerns of your boards and for accommodating the changes we've had to make today.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Madam Chair: With regard to the proposed recommendations from this deputant, maybe I can just put the question on the table. I see the clerk is coming back. She may give us some advice here. Is it going to be possible for us to move amendments on the clause-by-clause that would respond to the proposals made here? Or would amendments of that type, to respond to these, not be in order? I don't understand how we're going to amend the bill in order to respond to the recommendations.

The Chair: I'm not sure I follow your point, Mr Wildman.

Mr Wildman: I'm just wondering if we're going to be able to do this. I'm asking for advice. Are we going to be able to amend the bill to respond to these recommendations, or are they simply going to be dependent on the cabinet responding to these recommendations by regulation?

Mr Skarica: I think we should get some clarification from legislative counsel on that particular point, because we don't have the actual boundaries in the bill itself.

Mr Wildman: That's the point I raised. We don't have the boundaries in the bill.

The Chair: All right. We'll seek some direction with respect to that.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, my understanding — and I trust it will be confirmed by legislative counsel — is that while the Lieutenant Governor in Council clearly has the final decision-making power, it's possible to bring in amendments that would add caveats to this bill, that would set out the terms and conditions under which the boundaries would be developed.

The Chair: Thank you. We'll deal with that.

1350

OFFICE AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION

The Chair: Could I call upon the Office and Professional Employees International Union, Natalie Galesloot and Kathy McMonagle. Welcome.

Ms Kathy McMonagle: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen of the panel. I am here to speak with you on behalf of my brothers and sisters employed in the education sector from Marathon to the Manitoba border. I am representing the Office and Professional Employees International Union and would like to share our concerns regarding Bill 104.

We have not requested standing to come forward and primarily complain about our potential job loss. Most of us within this province are already trying to survive downsizing and restructuring already imposed by the Harris government. Although this is a threat for our members, we are here as a voice for our most precious commodity, our children and their future.

We must agree with Mr Snobelen's statement that the education system is critical to the future success of Ontario and that education is a priority and should always be a priority, but at whose expense? This government has been negligent in investigating important areas of this proposed bill. They have not carefully considered their actions, nor have they appropriately thought out the consequences. They have failed to realize that there are different experiences for every community throughout this province. You can't make one model and expect that it would meet the needs of everyone involved.

The statement endorsed by Mr Harris and Mr Snobelen to the constituents of Ontario is that there will be improved accountability to parents and taxpayers through the funding model. All that has been said thus far about it is that the funding for our new education system will be shifted from the residential taxpayers to provincial grants and business taxes.

Have we missed something here? Is this proposed funding model that no one has yet seen not actually

robbing Peter to pay Paul? How will this practice better our economy and enhance student performance? The concept may look great on paper but the truth is, money from provincial grants comes from taxpayers. Therefore, do Mr Harris and Mr Snobelen believe that the people of Ontario are not educated and intelligent enough to figure out that they will be taxed in other areas — again, areas which have not been identified?

Our education dollars must come from somewhere and we the taxpayers will be paying a higher price for a lower rate of return in education. We can assume that the new trend from this government will be to shift its responsibilities to municipalities. It is no wonder that the Harris government can cut its expenditures by 33%, or \$1.4 billion, over two years, and it should. Obviously, they will no longer be performing their duties with this new trend.

The geographical boundaries outlined by the Minister of Education are also alarming considering the imposed number of trustees. How does this government expect trustees to fairly represent the needs of each community in northern Ontario? Our northern Ontario communities do not have easily accessible routes from one community to another like southern Ontario. It is next to impossible for trustees from district board 5 or 6 to come together to make important decisions regarding our children.

Have any of you ever had the opportunity to drive from Red Lake to Fort Frances during winter? At a meeting on February 18, 1997, in Thunder Bay with the co-chairs of the Education Improvement Commission, Mr Cooke stated that he was coming to the north to look at the distance and was going to drive, but it was too impractical. Yet this would be expected by our trustees and possibly community members or committee members.

We recommend that this panel seriously consider and promote the constituent boards' proposal of splitting district 6 into A and B. Their proposal remains fiscally responsible as it still shares some common functions of school boards. This should also be considered and promoted throughout the northern region as it was reported in yesterday's paper, where district 5 also proposes the same concept.

To meet students' needs and to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are spent in the classroom should not mean that you exclude or replace the vital components that are already in place and working for students and their schools. These components include the non-instructional staff members. One of the powers the Education Improvement Commission has been given is the specific power to consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on "how to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards." This concept is frightening.

When the Harris government passes — if it passes — Bill 104 and privatizes services now performed by non-teaching staff, the personal touch which school board support staff presently demonstrate in their daily work will vanish. It will be replaced with an indifferent attitude which would not be in the best interests of all our children. With these services contracted out, can this government ensure the safety of our children? Can outsourced employees earning a minimum wage give the same care

and consideration to our children that current employees, who display pride and ownership in their jobs, do?

The Minister of Education states that the current model does not meet the needs of our students. We agree, but losing essential service that is now provided by support staff workers will not help meet that need either. We believe it only destroys it. Presently, support staff workers are a vital and intricate part of the school system. They are trained in their areas of expertise and they provide essential and professional service. In all cases, they are the familiar faces that children can rely on daily.

A child may have direct contact with a secretary several times a week, whether it be a scratched knee, a bleeding nose, a call home because of a sore stomach or just a safe place to go. She may very well be the person who provides orientation to new students and their parents, always maintaining an open line of communication between school and home. Also, an integral part of their job is maintaining a high level of confidentiality. Safety is ensured through the secretary monitoring and identifying visitors to the school, which is especially important in parental disputes. They also make arrangements during emergencies, such as ensuring the safe arrival home of children due to inclement weather, and also participate in the safe arrival at their school when they call home when your child hasn't arrived to find out why they're not at school that day.

Library technicians and assistants provide the opportunities for students to enrich their thirst for knowledge by utilizing the resources available in the libraries. The school library may be the only place a child can experience or appreciate a love for books — again, a familiar face to approach in time of need.

Special education assistants assist and provide support to developmentally delayed, physically challenged and learning-disabled students in an integrated setting. This includes maintaining current knowledge and an understanding of sign language, Bliss boards, FM systems, closed-caption machines, pictograms, Braille, crisis prevention intervention, and physio and speech therapy programs. They also encourage self-care, basic life skills, feeding and medication programs. Special education assistants modify individual academic programs in consultation with resource and classroom teachers, all of which is to attain the common goal of integrating special needs students, being able to meet their needs and prepare them for future success in society.

Again, we cannot stress enough how the thought of outsourcing these services is frightening and appalling. This legislation is only handling the present problems of the education system with smoke and mirrors. By terminating present employees to hire others through outsourcing will only cost taxpayers more money. Companies who out-source are looking to profit and not at the public's best interest.

Dollars aside, schools may no longer be a safe place for children. What companies, moving into our communities, taking our jobs, can ensure that the level of quality service be maintained and at what cost to our children? By outsourcing we are only jeopardizing the quality and the integrity of education and threatening our children's educational rights and their future.

The Harris government should not exercise their power by eliminating the quality of programs through reduced dollars and services allocated to education. How can we, as members of society, accept the dictatorial powers of the Education Improvement Commission being exempt from judicial review or public scrutiny when they are appointed and not even elected? This government should also ensure that all groups that have an interest and that are likely to be affected by the proposed changes have representation on the various committees which will be established by the commission itself. As taxpayers, where are our democratic rights?

Ladies and gentlemen of the panel, we thank you for your time and hope that you can influence our government back into democratic decision-making. Remember, the things that work in the system work now because we do. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation, I'd also like to thank you for listening and I'd also like to say that I hope you really heard what was really presented here today.

1400

Mr Miclash: Thank you for your presentation. I guess one thing that we hear over and over again from the Minister of Education is that funding cuts will not have an impact on the education of the child in the classroom. Can you maybe give us some examples of where you have seen this to be the case or not to be the case?

Ms McMonagle: When you look at the grade 9 destreamed program, just the fact that the children in those classes don't each get to walk out of the class, at the end of the day, with a textbook. If there's homework, assignments that they need to work on, there are not enough textbooks so that every child or student in that class can maintain their academic standing in that room. That's just textbooks.

The staffing resources too are very limited. As a special education assistant in a particular science class, I am responsible for four separate children, all of whom work at a totally different level — non-readers, non-writers — than someone who is working at a basic level. It certainly makes my job very difficult to provide the best support I can when you're short-staffed in that sense.

Ms Natalie Galesloot: I would like to add to that. If you take away the non-instructional staff from the classroom, you are going to utilize more of your resources in the classroom. If there's nobody there to do the things that these non-instructional staff are doing, what will your teachers be doing? How will the daily events be addressed, as far as getting everything done is concerned?

The school system works to a point. Yes, there need to be cuts within the system, and we totally agree with that, but you need the non-instructional staff. If the government looks at outsourcing those functions, they're going to lose the quality that they are now getting with people employed by the board.

Mr Wildman: I appreciate your presentation, but I'm going to take issue with part of it; that is, your acquiescence and use of the word "non-instructional" staff. I think you mean "non-teaching" staff. I think everybody — a teacher's aide, an educational assistant, a custodian, a secretary — who works in the school is involved in the instruction of students. I think there has

been a phony redefinition by this government of what is classroom education and what isn't. I take issue with your accepting that term. I understand why you do, but I don't think it should be accepted.

If there are fewer teachers' aides — let's use that as an example, educational assistants — in a class, how does that affect the students most directly needing those aides? But also, how does it affect the other students?

Ms McMonagle: If my job in the classroom is to provide a service, and I'm not there, then they probably don't do anything. Part of my job is to encourage them to participate to the best of their ability, to give them the opportunity, to say, "Now is a good time to bring up the point you were going to make," certainly to make them feel part of the classroom.

I don't think they will feel part of the class if someone isn't there to show them how to behave as part of the class, to say, "No, it's okay, Joe. Go ahead, you can do it," to give them some confidence, especially when you're looking at class sizes of maybe 35 kids.

It's hard to realize that aside from looking at the class as a whole, there are individual kids there who all work at different levels, who all have different needs. It's hard for one person, the classroom teacher, to the best of their ability, to meet the needs of everyone in the classroom. I feel that I am a benefit to the class, because I know that even if I can only get to four or five kids, that's better than not getting to any at all.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Thank you for coming. In the Legislative Assembly of Ontario we have a standing committee on agencies, boards and commissions. It doesn't matter what government, it's a standing committee of the Legislature. People who are appointed to the commission are brought forward and questioned, and so on and so forth. Mr Cooke was questioned when he was appointed. My question and my comments are related to outsourcing. He was asked about this and he said:

"I think the first thing, as I said before, that has to be done is some solid research to find out exactly what the range of outsourcing would be and what has worked and what has not worked.... There are some areas where it will work and there are other areas where it would be simplistic to think that it would work. That's the purpose of the commission: to do some research, to have some consultations and to make recommendations where we think it would work appropriately and where it would serve the best interests of students."

Would you agree with this statement? When we talk about outsourcing, regardless of who can do it, if it's the best possible service for the best possible price, the best deal for the taxpayer, if the government can do it, it should do it, and if it can't do it, the private sector should do it. What's your comment on that statement?

Ms Galesloot: First of all, I think the commission has been given too much power in order to decide what's good for the public. I think that should be put back to the public and the public should be asked what they think is good for them. To answer your question, no, I cannot agree with you, because I think that people who work for a particular organization take pride and ownership in their job and I think they represent the interests of that sector

better than any outsource. If you have an outsourcing issue — and now we're looking at having a freeze on minimum wage — it would be like a revolving door going through our school. Can you ensure the safety of our children not knowing who's being hired? Because these contractors can't keep up to who is working for them.

The Chair: Thank you very much for appearing before the committee today. We thank you for taking time from your busy work schedules.

RED LAKE BOARD OF EDUCATION

BEARDMORE, GERALDTON, LONGLAC AND AREA BOARD OF EDUCATION

HEARST BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: Could I call upon the Red Lake Board of Education, David McLeod; Beardmore, Geraldton, Longlac and Area Board of Education, Sharon Arsenault; and Hearst Board of Education, Lise Haman. Thank you very much for being here. I would ask you, since there are more than those I announced, to introduce yourselves. As you know if you've been here for some time, the committee rejigged its schedule to allow you 30 minutes for your presentation. If there is any time left over, then the committee will ask you some questions.

Ms Gloria Williamson: Good afternoon. I'm Gloria Williamson, trustee with the Red Lake Board of Education. The trustees of the Red Lake Board of Education appreciate having the opportunity to speak with you today.

The Red Lake board supports the recommendation and concerns that have been raised in the submissions of the Atikokan, Kenora, Dryden and Fort Frances-Rainy River boards of education. The issues have been discussed by the boards collectively and have been presented from the viewpoint of harsh reality.

We will not repeat or comment on these issues of geography, technology, the various socioeconomic patterns or relations and the emerging first nations political issues, since they have been dealt with in the abovementioned boards' presentations.

Earlier today you had members from our parent councils speak about their concerns of the possible consequences of the district 5 amalgamation. You heard them describe their schools and programs and articulate their fear of losing aspects of such that are very important to our students. As a parent, I share many of their concerns.

1410

It is very easy for one to say that voicing concerns is fearmongering, or that the new board will address issues of equity fairly, or that the new funding model will address northern and local anomalies. We have heard these statements from many in our area, and let me clearly tell you that we as a board have the same concerns.

We realize that there are several realities in our province that will not change: (a) The available financial resources for education are shrinking; and (b) all school boards across the province have to become more efficient in their operation, have to do business in innovative manners, have to create partnerships, linkages etc, and have to engage in alternative resource-generating activities.

Since available financial resources will continue to shrink across the province, it probably is safe to say that the new funding model won't deliver more money to the new district 5 board than is presently available to the five existing boards. Second, we think it is reasonable to believe that parents, staff and trustees in the new board will have an expectation of equitable access to services and resources. We in the Red Lake board, who are three hours from the nearest school board, will definitely have an expectation of access to all services that will be in place in the boards we will be amalgamated with. The other boards will have the expectation of having the same school organizational model as our board: full-time principals and secretaries in all schools, student assistance for special needs children, full custodial and maintenance services in each school. I could go on and on. I suggest the expectation of equity of services and programs will cause the operational costs of the new district 5 board to be higher than is expected by the government.

If you combine the diminishing resources with the type of services we presently have in place for our students and add the explosive equity issue, it is inconceivable to believe that this district 5 amalgamation will not negatively impact on our students.

Do you think that all boards in district 5 will adjust to match our school delivery model, or will our model have to change to match the model for the rest of the new board? Since we represent less than 10% of the student population of the new board, we believe our school delivery model will have to change to reflect that which is in place in the rest of the new board. Consequently, our students will be negatively impacted.

Over the years we have developed a philosophy of maximizing the amount of financial resources directed towards the classroom. Government grants and local taxation have been the main source of revenue but have not been sufficient to allow us to provide the services to our students that we are presently providing. Earlier I spoke of boards needing to do business differently and engage in alternative revenue-generating activities. I would like to give you an example of such, show the benefit to our students and comment on this as an example of an activity that could be curtailed in the large board environment, thus negatively impacting on our students.

Our board has actively engaged in a host of training activities over the years: Jobs Ontario broker, adult education, industry and first nations partnerships, to name a few. These activities have generated considerable revenue that has been directed to students. For example, we have purchased computers in large numbers for students on a continuous basis, mainly from training profit revenue. We have one computer for every three students in our high school. This year alone our board's training activities have purchased \$150,000 worth of computers that will be placed in our schools at the end of the year.

With 1,200 students in a board, that translates into approximately \$125 per student. If a board of 10,000 students did the same, it would mean that board spent \$1.2 million on computers for students from revenue that did not come from the government or taxpayers. That is significant.

Another innovative Red Lake board initiative has resulted in healthier learning environments, more productive learning environments and significant financial savings. This is due to our alternative energy program. Over the last seven years we have retrofitted or built new elementary schools, one school in each of our three communities, with groundwater or solar heat pump energy systems. Not only does this technology provide free air conditioning, which makes a more productive learning environment, and vastly superior outside air exchange in the winter, which makes a healthier learning environment, but it saves the board approximately \$100,000 per year in energy costs for the three schools. Can you imagine the provincial financial significance if this were extrapolated to many more boards and schools? The numbers are staggering, to say the least.

We are concerned that initiatives such as these will not be continued in the large board environment or that the specific benefits that accrue to our students as a result of these initiatives will be funnelled to the large board in general, once again possibly negatively impacting on our students.

Local partnerships that have been negotiated or developed as a result of people knowing and trusting one another and having the same goal in mind are at risk in a large board environment when there may not be local senior staff and trustees to guide the formation of the partnerships.

An example of a very significant partnership will be outlined by Mr Louis Simard, the co-chair of our Native Education Circle, in another presentation later this evening. We as a board can't say enough positive things about the cooperation and relationships we have with the first nations people and organizations in the area. We are very concerned with the implications of the amalgamation on this exciting project and on the variety of issues that will affect first nations trustee representation and the various agreements boards presently have in place.

I have touched upon a variety of situations, programs, and concerns that trustees, parents, community members and staff have spoken to us about at school. All these concerns relate directly to students in our classrooms. Due to a variety of factors, some of which I have mentioned, we feel the government's agenda of directing as many financial resources to the classroom as possible has been achieved in our board. We can clearly demonstrate how students have benefited from our efficiencies, innovative partnerships, linkages and actions over the past few years.

We are very concerned that the amalgamation will not improve the teaching situation, school structures and benefits for students in our board. We feel the opposite: that our students will be negatively impacted.

I urge you to consider the makeup of district school board 5 from the viewpoint of not only the effect on students in our board but the effects on students in other boards also. We strongly believe that a smaller amalgamation will dramatically reduce the potential negative impact on our students. Thank you.

Ms Sharon Arsenault: Good afternoon. My name is Sharon Arsenault and I am accompanied by the director of my board, Joe Viridamo. I am a separate school board

member of the Beardmore, Geraldton, Longlac and Area Board of Education. I thank you for allowing me this opportunity to express the concerns of separate school trustees in northwestern Ontario.

At the case study meeting held in Thunder Bay with the chairs of the proposed Education Improvement Commission on February 18, 1997, I asked the following questions about separate school representation on public school boards: What will happen to separate school representation through Bill 104? What does it mean that boards are "deemed extended"?

Many rural boards in northwestern Ontario have chosen not to extend, for various reasons. At least representation was present through separate school trustees on public school boards. The Beardmore, Geraldton, Longlac and Area Board of Education has two such representatives. Altogether, northwestern Ontario has 12 separate school representatives serving on public school boards stretching from the Ontario-Manitoba border to Manitouwadge.

Clearly, Bill 104 is based on the demographics of large southern Ontario boards of education. In our part of the province things are significantly different and this requires a different set of considerations. From this perspective, we come to the significant issue of separate school representation on public school boards.

1420

We are in perplexing and confusing times, where it would seem that the old phrase "taxation without representation" is surfacing again, in the spirit of Bill 30, to the proposed Bill 104.

For practical reasons, the vast majority of our students who complete an elementary education in the separate school system must enter a small public high school. We already have enough difficulty offering the full range of required courses to our students who attend our small high schools. Simply stated, unlike many of the boards to the south, there are no "economies of scale" to justify a second high school in most northern communities. To do so would be an injustice to the student and the taxpayer.

We in the smaller communities in northwestern Ontario have a long history of sharing of services. Providing the best education for our young people has been our greatest priority. Because of this, we have entered into many agreements with our children's best interests at heart. Attached, I have provided as an example a listing of partnerships between the Beardmore, Geraldton, Longlac and Area Board of Education and various agencies and organizations in the communities under the jurisdiction of the board.

On January 13, 1997, the Minister of Education and Training announced school board amalgamation. The proposed district school board 6 is to be made up of four amalgamated school boards. One of the boards, the largest one, has a coterminous separate school board with two Catholic high schools. The three smaller boards are situated in communities where the separate school boards have chosen not to extend at the present time. This means that there are no Catholic high schools in the communities and the separate school students attend public high schools. There are, in total, seven school trustees on these three public boards.

Are we, the Catholic taxpayers, destined to be eliminated? Are we like the ant who was crushed by the gentle giant simply because the giant did not know the ant was there? One of the comments when we met with the co-chairs was that they didn't know we existed.

Bill 104 in its present form ignores this fundamental reality and must be amended to accommodate this fact. The following proposal is recommended: that Bill 104 is amended to allow for adequate representation on public school boards of the interests of Catholic secondary school students; that it is recognized that this is a unique situation for northwestern Ontario; and that there is representation of separate school trustees on local committees of the Education Improvement Commission.

In conclusion, we would ask that you consider the above recommendations, which will ensure representation and quality education for all our students. Thank you.

Ms Lise Haman: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Lise Haman. I'm the supervising principal for the Hearst Board of Education. My colleague is Ruby Brunet. She is the chair of the Hearst Board of Education.

Just before coming in here, someone suggested I give you a minute to look for the town of Hearst on the map of Ontario. Just to help you, all you have to do —

Mr Wildman: It's a suburb of Hornepayne.

Ms Haman: Yes. Just to help you out, past Longlac you drive another two hours and 10 or 15 minutes. It's about 210 kilometres of absolutely nothing but trees and a straight road. It's about five and a half to six hours from here, northeast. And you thought we were far north here, for those of you who have never come this far. The closest community to Hearst on the east is approximately a little over 100 kilometres, and that's Puskasing.

When you get to Hearst, Hearst is the most heart-warming community of approximately 6,000 people, of whom 98% are francophone. French Canadian culture is predominant in all aspects of community life. Within this francophone society, the Hearst Board of Education offers English education to a total, right now, of 332 elementary and secondary students.

In the next two years, the Hearst board will be struggling to maintain quality programs for its English-speaking students. Not only are the English-speaking residents concerned about losing English services in this community, but the Hearst Board of Education will also be losing 131 non-resident students who will be moving into their own first nations school at Constance Lake. A total of approximately 201 English-language students, elementary and secondary, will be remaining in what presently constitutes the Hearst Board of Education.

The Hearst Board of Education has been active in maintaining English education in Hearst and in restructuring its administration and its financial services in order to fulfil its mandate as well as practise fiscal restraint. It is presently experiencing what the future administration of a larger board will look like. I was hired on a part-time basis in September to assist them in their restructuring. I live and work here in Thunder Bay and I travel to Hearst on a monthly basis for two to three days. We communicate all the time through e-mail, telephone, fax and teleconferencing. Despite all the modern technology

available to us, the reality is that there still remain issues which are difficult to deal with from a distance.

Fortunately, at the present time, there are representatives — trustees and administrators — who can fill in many of the gaps for me. However, in the future, if there are no representatives, who will look after the needs of the English students in this community?

Ms Ruby Brunet: As a result of our experiences, the Hearst Board of Education is concerned that there may not be any representation on their part on either the new district board 1 or on the local implementation committee. If there is no representation for communities of this type, what will happen to struggling minorities such as this one? In the case of Hearst, it will become extinct.

In conclusion, we would like to recommend that the committee take into consideration the following matters as implementation plans for Bill 104 are being developed:

That Bill 104 allow for adequate representation of diverse educational communities in the province. Representation on the board or on the local implementation committee is critical to ensure that the unique and diversified needs of each community be met in order to avoid a less-than-adequate level of education and, in a case such as Hearst, extinction of the English-language program.

Ms Haman: That Bill 104 recognize the geographical nature of the area. District board 1 will span a distance of 700 kilometres from one end of the board to the other. Despite all kinds of technology available to allow for ongoing communication, there will always remain a need for people to come together on issues of critical importance. Education is a people business, and in order for it to succeed there must be personal connections and opportunities to grow as a team on a regular basis. How can communities such as these possibly work as teams unless there are ways to ensure that they can come together at critical times to fulfil their mandate to the best of their ability and, as a result, improve the quality of education in their communities? In order to work effectively as teams, they will require financial support for travel as well as appropriate technology to function.

Finally, that Bill 104 recognize the unique needs of the smaller, isolate communities in Ontario, and I believe you've heard examples of this already. In many of the communities there are very small schools. Will students have to travel 100 kilometres to get a secondary education, for example?

Thank you very much for your attention and for allowing us the opportunity to express our concerns with regard to Bill 104.

Mr Wildman: I very much appreciate your presentation and the fact that we were able to hear a little more than we might have otherwise. I've raised the problem about district board 1 in the House because, as you probably are aware, I represent Hornepayne. The suggestion that has come is that we should use technology; that we can have teleconferencing so that people from Hornepayne or Hearst are not going to have to drive all the way to Timmins or to Timiskaming to participate in a meeting.

You've described the difficulties, that even if you do use modern technology, if the infrastructure is there, you

still have to get together. Is it your concern that because of that, the cost of travel and accommodation for those kinds of necessary meetings will inevitably come out of the budget that could otherwise be going into classroom education, in your case for English education in Hearst?

1430

Ms Brunet: This is my fourth trip out of town in the last two weeks concerning Bill 104.

Mr Wildman: If I could play the devil's advocate then, I'd ask this question: If it's a problem for your board as it relates to English education, how come we're not hearing the same thing from the new French boards, which are going to be covering enormous territories? We all support the establishment of the new French boards. They are going to have enormous problems with regard to small numbers in certain areas and very large distances. Can you speculate on that, since you come from Hearst and you know what's happening on the other side?

Mr Brunet: The coterminous board in Hearst is a unilingual French board and they're very pleased. They're getting equal funding to us right now, so they're very happy with what they're getting and they're not at a point to be arguing with anyone right now.

Mr Wildman: In other words, they'll live with it.

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): My question is more to Ms Williamson. I certainly understand and respect the success stories you've had with your different partnerships and cooperative services that you've highlighted in your presentation. I am approaching this from the perspective of someone who has seen school board amalgamation in my area involve four boards on the public side, representing some 85,000 students. The concern I have is, given the efforts that have been undertaken in my area to date, how are you arriving at the conclusion that those success stories you've experienced locally are going to be compromised by the process or the outcomes anticipated by this bill?

I think those are very valuable experiences and tools to build on as you move forward. From what I've seen in my own area in London, Middlesex, Elgin and Oxford in southwestern Ontario, those school boards are starting to recognize those, albeit it was problematic for them at the outset; I'm not going to dismiss that. But I'm concerned that you're arriving at conclusions prematurely that the success stories you've experienced so far are going to be compromised somehow.

Ms Williamson: I guess some of our concerns are around trustee representation. In our case we only have 1,200 students and, as I articulated, we will be very lucky to get one trustee on that new, larger board. That would be one of the major concerns we would have. Also, at this time, when we've gotten into the partnerships with first nations communities, with industry, with business, the revenue we have generated from those initiatives has remained to service our students. We're a little bit concerned that the revenue will now go into a broader base and it won't come back to the students within our geographic area.

Mrs McLeod: A very brief question, but I want to begin by thanking you for making the effort to make your presentations as a group. It is an absolutely impossible situation, made only slightly less impossible by the fact

that you had a little bit more time than was originally allotted, and bizarre that Hearst would be coming to Thunder Bay, even though the amalgamation proposal is that you be in district 1, not in district 6. The very fact that you applied to speak here and not in Sudbury tomorrow is an indicator of just how crazy this whole thing is. But you've done what I knew you would do, which is to speak very eloquently of the way in which small boards in northern Ontario meet the challenges, and the value of small boards.

For your information, Steve Lawton, a researcher whom the minister has used from time to time, did a paper in which he looked at all the recent research and he said it's counterproductive to amalgamate any board with more than 3,000 students. So I think research says there is value in small boards.

My only question, and it will be very brief, is that as bizarre as all this is, impossible as it all is, I really believe it is the first step towards essentially the dissolution of school boards. Your role will become so impossible — lack of access, size of boards, difficulty getting people to run and total loss of funding control — that eventually we will just simply lose boards altogether. I don't know if any of you want to comment on that.

Ms Arseneault: The distances in the north — I drove three and a half hours to get here. I took a day off work. We have lives other than what we're doing. We have to work for a living. So you won't have people.

The Chair: I want to thank all of you for coming, making your presentation and the extraordinary efforts you had to make to travel over such long distances to be with us. We appreciate it.

LAKEHEAD BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Chair: May I ask the special education advisory committee, Lakehead Board of Education, Leah Salini, to come forward, please. Welcome, Ms Salini.

Mrs Leah Salini: Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you this afternoon. Before I start, I'm the mother of four children. Two children attend high school, two children attend elementary school. Our youngest daughter has Down syndrome; hence my interest in special education and my involvement with the special education advisory committee for the Lakehead board.

I speak today on behalf of the special education advisory committee of the Lakehead Board of Education. Our committee consists of 12 members. They represent a variety of community organizations and parent organizations within the city here. They're listed on the little chart on your handout on the front page there. We represent the interests of 845 identified exceptional students in our board and their families. We strongly recommend that the new board of education structure include mandatory special education advisory committees to ensure the ongoing concerns of students with special needs will continue to be addressed.

It's very important that the voice of SEAC be heard by those who govern. In the new region that makes up our board, we have strong concerns about how this can occur. The technology does not exist in northwestern Ontario for

videoconferencing. The communities are too far apart to make meetings cost-efficient. We cannot presently be electronically joined.

The Fewer School Boards Act has a number of implications for us as a committee and for the various students we advocate for and represent.

The geographic area of district 6 is far too large for SEAC to be able to advise and present issues and concerns on behalf of children who have special needs. SEAC has no budget to access for funding of technological equipment to connect the district 6 communities. Communication between boards is both extremely expensive and unavailable in some parts of the district. Focusing on the individual needs of children and families, while at the same time sharing information and dealing with the issues of all the different communities, will be a very large challenge.

Our group is very concerned with the possible negative impact on our children locally and how they are served. The region may have unrealistic expectations of our board and its ability to serve students and provide services. We worry that the region may look to us for resources that are not available. Our board's current initiative to include children in their neighbourhood schools will be severely compromised if the region expects our limited resources to extend to include them.

One SEAC representing the diverse geographical communities will not be able to satisfy local individual needs. A process to ensure that the needs within the district are being met should be established, preferably at the local level. Each community will have to continue to monitor the special needs of their children, provide support to families and act as advocates within their own communities. Board support, both human resources and financial resources, will be required to accomplish this effectively.

The people who give their time to SEAC are volunteers. Adding significant travel and time costs to enable SEAC to function effectively would place an unfair burden on SEAC parents, many of whom have jobs and most of whom have to care for children with special needs. It is unrealistic to expect volunteers to travel 500 kilometres to attend a meeting or help a family.

We recognize transition issues will emerge as SEACs throughout the district will bring different perspectives. Considering the overwhelming geographical disparity, we question how equity of delivery of services and programs can be accomplished for children with special needs.

The future power of school councils to make decisions on school budgets is an extreme concern of ours. The potential exists for schools to place undue emphasis or make decisions that will have a negative impact on including students with special needs in their neighbourhood schools. It may evolve that individual schools would not be truly representative of a cross-section of the population, and it's with some interest that I was given a news release today where the parent council is urging stronger school councils, which is something that certainly is in opposition to what we feel should happen.

SEAC has a major concern with the commitment and longevity of volunteers on school councils and their accountability in regard to tasks currently undertaken by our elected trustees. I know the current structure of

school councils calls for a one- or two-year commitment on the part of council members. I've been involved with education with my children locally for 14 or 15 years. I wouldn't pretend to know in one year or two years all the issues that are needed to make effective decisions at a school level.

Serious inconsistencies could arise among individual schools in attempting to meet the demands of school councils which insist on excellence at the expense of inclusion. Each school board must work cooperatively with SEACs to assure equal opportunity for students with exceptionalities and to ensure consistent treatment of all students.

In conclusion, our group lends its strong support to the majority view of our board, as it was presented to you earlier today by the chair. As representatives of our government, you are being called upon to make decisions about the future of our school boards. It is our expectation that you will make decisions based on the best interests of children and their needs. Our children deserve the very best.

1440

Mr Smith: Thank you for your presentation. We certainly heard yesterday in Ottawa that there's a feeling that there's a great deal of inconsistency in terms of how ministry policy — and there was qualified support for the existing ministry policy as it applies to special needs students and certainly inconsistency as it is applied between boards across the province as well, in terms of their commitment or lack of commitment in the area of special needs.

You raised the issue of parent councils and we've heard as well support for stronger legislative empowerment of parent councils; we've heard a more cautious approach to parent councils as the committee has received deputations. What is your level of support, given the comments you made? What is your bottom line for the range of responsibilities that parent councils should have in this province?

Mrs Salini: I would have to speak personally on this issue. I think there is a very large place for parental involvement in schools. I've been a volunteer in my children's school for the whole time they've been there and I think my input and my time has been well received by the school community.

I would not as a member of a school community, as a parent, pretend to know how best to run a school. I don't feel that I would be qualified to make decisions that would affect the quality of education that our children could be getting, and from the special education perspective my concerns are that parents on parent councils would have within their hands, under the new proposed legislation, the opportunity to make some very pointed decisions and make life very unpleasant for some children and families within schools, which I think is very unfair. I strongly support all parental involvement in schools, but I think as far as school councils are concerned it should be an advisory capacity, not making strong decisions for children.

Mrs McLeod: I want to thank you for taking time to come and present and for making clear why children with special needs are at greater risk if this amalgamation goes

ahead. One of my great frustrations in dealing with this bill is that people somehow don't think it's really going to affect kids in a classroom in a negative way. That's why it's so important for parents such as yourself to come forward and say, "Here's what it actually means to me as a parent advocate for a special needs child."

That's what I want to ask you about, because you've said how much more difficult it will be to be an advocate, just to reach the board meetings, just to be part of the advisory committee meetings, just to be part of the reviews of individual children's assessments. I have some very real concerns about the ability of parents who know what the needs are to be advocates once the ministry takes over 100% funding, because under that scenario not only will it be difficult for you to get to that board meeting, to sit on the advisory committee, but when you go to your local trustees and say, "We don't think you're doing enough, setting enough of a priority on special ed," they'll say, "We simply don't have the funding flexibility." The Minister of Education will say, "It is the board setting the priorities." I think the ability of parents to lobby the Ministry of Education directly is going to be much more minimal.

We've seen the indicators. Even in the \$150 million that the ministry has suggested is going to be its savings through amalgamation, \$1.3 million of that comes directly out of educational support for children with special needs to be in an integrated setting.

My worry is that as the funding formula comes out, it's going to be simplified, they're going to look at a flat rate to meet special needs, maybe a percentage of the population that you would expect to have with special needs, and that will be it. I guess I just want to ask you what that does to you as a parent advocate.

Mrs Salini: There's plain and proper evidence that we need the ability to make decisions for our own children at the local level, especially for our children with special needs. We have built into our system here the opportunity to call for extra help for children in identified areas where it's needed. With funding coming from someplace far above, we're not going to have that opportunity, most definitely.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I too appreciate your being here today. I think you bring a very important perspective to our consideration of this bill. I was struck by the concerns you raised with respect to the role of parent councils. I think this is very important. I believe that most of us are supportive of increased parent involvement and would encourage that, but it's very important to determine the nature of that and how that differs perhaps from the role of an elected school trustee, whether it should differ and how it differs.

I think we've heard a great deal about the inappropriateness of the size of the boards and what it means here in northwestern Ontario. I think that while some amalgamations are appropriate, the numbers and the boundaries are wrong. But even more than that, I'm also concerned that this bill takes away decision-making powers from the elected trustees, and I fear that they will become in the future almost a buffer between parents and ratepayers and the decision-making which will be taking place within the Ministry of Education. I wonder if you

could talk about how your relationship with trustees has been important in terms of the delivery of the programs that you care about and have worked and advocated for.

Mrs Salini: As you can see by our little chart on the front of our presentation, by law, three of the members of our committee must be trustees. They have provided a very valuable role over the years in hearing issues from parents with children, meaning those of us around the table, and as a place where I as an advocate for parents and children can send people who are having problems and concerns that can't be resolved within their own school communities. I can direct them to trustees who, in my best estimation, will help them with the problems they have. Elected trustees are people who represent all the people.

My concern is that with parent councils, those people could be representing a very small group of people with a very strong opinion and that could certainly flavour the direction a school would take where children with special needs are concerned. I think it's important to say at this time that in the past six or seven months I have been hearing in our own community rumblings from parents of normal children about, "Why do these kids have to be in our schools?" In times when education funding is declining and money is becoming tighter, children with special needs are being seen as a big expense. May I tell you — I'm getting the sign this is almost over — they're a most worthwhile expense.

The Vice-Chair (Mr Dwight Duncan): Thank you very much for your thoughtful presentation today.

1450

MICHAEL BALLANTYNE

The Vice-Chair: Next up is Mike Ballantyne, an individual presenter. You have a total of 10 minutes.

Mr Michael Ballantyne: Good afternoon. My name is Michael Ballantyne. I'm a student at Thunder Bay's Lakehead University and I'm a lifelong resident of Thunder Bay. I received all of my primary and secondary education here in Thunder Bay, within the Lakehead Board of Education. I come to you today to present my personal views on Bill 104, as someone who has recently left the secondary school system and as someone who believes in quality education for Ontario's children but also as someone who is interested in an efficient and affordable education system.

I feel that I did receive a quality primary and secondary education here in Thunder Bay, but I fear this quality is in jeopardy. While I have recently left the system, I have a younger brother who is still in the system, in grade 6. It has become apparent to me that although it wasn't really that long ago that I was in grade 6, my brother is not receiving the same education I did. The basics of reading and writing and the fundamentals of math and science seem to lack the emphasis they were once given.

While standards have clearly slipped, school board spending in Ontario grew by 82% between 1985 and 1995. On the other hand, students in the classroom have not experienced improved education despite the increase in spending. We can do better, and it is time for a change. In my opinion, Bill 104 puts Ontario's education

system back on the track of being among the world's best.

In recent years, our education system has become too top-heavy with bureaucrats, trustees and supervisors while the student in the classroom has clearly suffered the cost. While property taxes have increased tremendously to feed this bureaucratic monster, the quality of education has suffered.

Bill 104 puts the needs of students first, ahead of the revenue-hungry eduocrats whose insatiable appetite for tax dollars has placed a burden on today's economy. Too many young people, when finished their education, are unable to find meaningful employment, because of these high taxes. The quality of education has gone down, the education taxes have gone up, and as a result job opportunities for students leaving the system have decreased. Change is clearly needed.

By cutting the number of trustees to 700 from 1,900, capping their salaries at \$5,000 a year and reducing the number of school boards almost in half, Bill 104 makes a clear statement that education takes place in the classroom, not in the board offices. It is in this classroom where we must focus if we are to achieve the quality education we all want. This is not a new concept, and many other provinces have already acted on reforming their education systems.

I find it interesting that most of the arguments against change and criticisms of Bill 104 have come from administrators, trustees, teachers and union leaders, all of whom have an interest in keeping the system bloated and top-heavy. It is time we started listening to parents' and students' concerns first. Parents want a more accountable education system, one that allows them more say in their children's education. I believe that the school councils provide that voice for parents. The government has promised a more meaningful role in which they will be more responsible for reporting on such things as academic progress, discipline and program offerings.

While the size of most boards will increase, parents will have more of a say. As the role of school councils becomes more meaningful, trustees will also have to focus more on their jobs. I expect their role will focus more on management issues such as busing and school maintenance. The province as well will have to focus on its new responsibilities of curriculum and monitoring standards. Annual reports will also be published to give parents more information on their education tax dollars and how they are being spent. The result of this more clearly defined system will be a more effective, accountable and responsive education system.

The real winners in Bill 104, however, are the students. With a provincial commitment to curriculum standards, students will get the education they deserve. A return to core basics of education will be welcomed. They will also receive this education without having to carry the future heavy burden of the wasteful overspending of today.

I want to commend the government for taking these bold steps today to ensure the continuing success story of Ontario's education system. I firmly believe that these changes are in the best interests of the students of today and the students of tomorrow.

Finally, I want to thank the committee for coming to Thunder Bay and hearing our opinions in the north. We appreciate it.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): Good afternoon, Mr Ballantyne. So you don't think that the proposed district 6 or region 6 for the board is going to be a problem in terms of the size, in terms of the massive area that will be covered and in terms of the opportunity for people to be involved, for parents and people to go to public board meetings? You don't think that's a problem?

Mr Ballantyne: No. I think that the increased importance of the school councils will give parents that input. It's also really important that the province is taking on to maintain some standards, especially in curriculum. The role of the school boards will become less important, and I'm not as worried about the size. I was reading that in New Brunswick they don't have any boards. The role of boards will be decreased and parents will still have a say.

Mr Gravelle: I don't mean to be rude in the slightest, but your speech had all the qualities of one that would have been written by or for the minister himself. That's fine, but I guess I want to ask you whether indeed — are you obviously somebody who supports the government's agenda in general and this is part of your support?

Mr Ballantyne: I support it.

Mr Gravelle: Did you seek some of their input in terms of your remarks?

Mr Ballantyne: My report today? I received information, but they didn't write my report for me. I don't think there's anything wrong in supporting the government. Lots of people support the government. I strongly believe the government is on the right path.

Ms Lankin: I think the point Mr Gravelle was making is that some of the language is verbatim from the minister's speeches, and those of us who listen to him answer questions in the House ad nauseam are kind of nauseated by some of the language, and so we respond when we hear those pat phrases.

The problem I have with the argument you put forward, that all those who are complaining are trustees, teachers and unions who have got a vested interest, is that it's an awful lot like what we hear from the government about all those special interest groups and anyone who opposes the government is a special interest group. I think some of those people have some very valuable input to make. You suggest that parents and students should be listened to. In fact, virtually every parent representative who has come before this committee has been opposed to the changes that are taking place in Bill 104 and with respect to other changes that are coming down the pike in the education system.

I myself have been meeting with students involved in secondary school student councils across the province, their provincial executive, and recently I attended a conference of over 350 student council representatives, very bright, energetic, high level of activity and participation in the school system, that group of students. They were overwhelmingly opposed to the directions in this bill and what is coming with respect to the funding reform in the nature of per pupil grants. So I'm at a loss when you say we should be listening to these people and in fact those people's voices are critical. I wonder, what

parents and students are you referring to who you think are supportive of this?

Mr Ballantyne: I can't comment on presentations you've heard elsewhere around the province, but obviously the number of presentations you can hear is limited. The opinions I've heard are that reform is needed, that if we continue on the track we're on, too much money will be taken out of the classroom.

I've heard a lot of debate about how many boards we need up here, but I think the overall direction of more money in the classroom and a more accountable education system to taxpayers, that's an opinion I've heard.

1500

Mr Skarica: Thank you very much for your presentation, sir. We did hear from some of the trustees from the Lakehead board this morning, and they were by and large in favour of the direction that Bill 104 was going. Renny Maki in particular told us — he was a trustee — that he felt that currently trustees are little more than rubber stamps, that they rubber-stamp decisions already made by the administration. He was in favour of school councils. Perhaps we could ask you what, if any, input right now comes from parents towards the day-to-day education of their students and how would you like to see that role develop over time with school councils?

Mr Ballantyne: I think it's important that parents' input is directed at the school level. I'd be interested. I think Mr Gravelle mentioned about how much input parents would have into these new boards. I wonder how many parents could name any of the trustees on the Lakehead Board of Education. I don't think right now there's a lot of input from parents into that body anyway. I think that input by parents at the school level, as far as what courses are being offered and the standards they expect in their schools, is much more valuable for parents.

Mr Skarica: You had indicated that you felt that your brother wasn't getting as good an education as you had when you went to school. What input, if any, did his parents or you have in dealing with that situation, indicating to the school system what you've told us today?

Mr Ballantyne: I think right now there are some school bodies, but they are somewhat limited. I am hoping that with the province taking over a core curriculum and making sure that those standards are met in all schools across the province, and also allowing parents' input at the local schools to make sure that their schools meet the standards they're expecting in their local schools, that's the input we need. The most valuable input a parent can make is at the school level.

The Vice-Chair: Mr Ballantyne, thank you very much. We appreciate your presentation today.

MOTHERS FOR EDUCATION

The Vice-Chair: Next up is Mothers for Education, Beverley Rizzi, founder. Welcome.

Ms Beverley Rizzi: First of all, I'd like to thank you for giving us the opportunity to share our point of view today. I'd also like to share that Kathleen Wynne, Citizens for Local Democracy, and Jacqueline Latter, Ontario Education Alliance, are here lending their support today because we are united Ontario-wide and we are quite opposed to Bill 104.

I stand before you today as only one member of Mothers for Education. I bring with me Kazia, a grade 10 student, and Susan Gliddon, another concerned parent. I do this to ensure that it is not only my point of view that is heard today, as I believe that many voices have not been heard and many children have no voice.

Our children do not vote and we speak for them. I submit to you today letters from parents and students to aid you in your decisions and help give you a more accurate overview of what isn't in education today.

I am here to question, what is the education plan for Ontario and which direction are we going in? To date we do not have that information. Most of all, I'm here to plead why we should not follow through with Bill 104.

Bill 104 is predicated on the assumption that the education system in Ontario is broken. We, as parents and students, challenge that assumption. We believe that Mr Snobelen succeeded in creating the crisis he publicly promised to create, and that in itself is no basis for Bill 104.

Our system is repairable, as our system was functioning. We want to preserve the excellent education system that we once had, and that was only a short time ago.

Bill 104 removes democracy. Our local representatives will be less accessible to parents and students and therefore less responsible for the real decisions in education. I would like you to answer me today, how will we as parents advocate for our children with only one board, district 6, and that board's boundaries governing an area equal to that the size of a country like France? That's a mighty big board.

Are we to call a 1-800 number? I use family support and at times I've waited for days to access them, only to find that when I do get through I wait for close to two hours before finally speaking to someone. I can't imagine a system like this for education. I really can't. Can you?

Your Education Improvement Commission meets behind closed doors. I find that inexcusable, as our government is not above the law. We have no history on their or knowledge of their expertise, other than Dave Cooke — does he have children? — and Ann Vanstone. Can you fill us in on what we don't know? Who else is a party to this commission? What kind of people are they? What is their background? Do they have kids in school today? How long ago were they in the school system, or their children? Most of all, how long has it been since they have even entered a classroom?

We, as parents and students, do not want to trust blindly in our government when the information just isn't there and so many questions go unanswered or simply ignored. We have questions such as: Efficiencies like closing a school? How does one close a school without representatives to advocate for that school? Doing things your way will leave us with communities without representation.

Your unwillingness to share the information with the people of Ontario worries me, or does this government know what is ahead? I have talked to some of your representatives who do not even know the details of Bill 104. I can equate this with the blind leading the blind. I'm sorry, but I can. I have called everywhere. I will not support Bill 104 without knowing all the necessary information and what kind of repercussions it could have.

Let us talk about the companion piece of this bill, the removal of taxation authority of the local school boards. So now we have an education system totally under government control. Of course, the piece that falls thereafter is the downloading of all other taxes on our communities.

Ontario is a province made up of much diversity, with affluent communities and some not so affluent. How will those less-advantaged areas support your new, more efficient taxation channels? It's a really good question. I live in Nalalu. It's pretty scary for us out there right now. Will they crumble in the fall? The gaps between the rich and the poor grow wider and wider still. Is this more efficient to you? Because it isn't, it really isn't, to me.

I want to know your stand on funding. What are your funding levels going to be for the children of Ontario? We will be taking it down to the lowest dollar figure, is that what it is? Are we going to be taking it down there? Is that somewhere around \$4,800 per student? To instill change without transition is morally wrong. Are we dealing with a government without humanity?

What is your plan for special needs children? What is your plan for exceptional children? What is your plan for all those kids who fall in between?

One student writes me, "I am not a robot." Programming such as art, phys ed, sports programs, home economics, shop and music are vital to turning out well-rounded children who can learn to take a basic math application and put it to use in something like art. Basketball, for example, is geometry: distance, calculation and estimation. What good is book learning if our children do not know how to apply it? Where will our future artists, musicians, authors, chefs, mechanics and so on come from if our children are not first exposed to these options in school?

Contrary to popular government belief, we are not just a society of big business and computers. I resent the possibility of business advertising in our gymnasiums and the notion that my child could work at some hamburger stand to earn a high school credit. Children find themselves in school. They learn not only about themselves but how to function well in our society.

What is your plan for classroom supplies, or are we as parents expected to foot that bill? We already volunteer for playground equipment, computers and such, and still carry on with our independent lives and our independent contributions to society. How much more are we as parents expected to do?

How dare you rearrange expenses? Essentials — principals, SESP teachers, books, custodians, heating and snow removal — are all vital to education in Ontario. If you look at a country like Japan, it took Japan years to develop an education plan for their children, and it works. Again, I suggest, what are we doing to Ontario's children?

What are you offering to help our classroom children today? I hear of nothing. Is there anything for their tomorrows? How many children have already fallen through your cracks in the name of efficiency, or is it really in the name of funding a 30% tax break? How many more are we going to lose tomorrow? What scares me most is will we ever get back what we lose now?

You claim that you will not increase the gaps between the rich and the poor. All children will have an equal education. There will be no second-class education in Ontario. I recall Mr Snobelen making that statement more than once. Then I ask you now why we have, within the last year, private schools charging private dollars to give our children what they are not getting in school today. I can't pay for a private school. Many of us can't. What are you going to do for my special needs son or my exceptional daughter? I don't think there's anything there. I really suspect nothing.

Lastly, I challenge you today to show me a plan — yes, in reading, writing and arithmetic — of where this money, this new-found money, money gained from cuts and Bill 104, is redirected to our children in classroom education.

Kazia, our grade 10 student, will have the last and final word in our presentation to you today. She is, after all a student, and her voice is important.

Mr Skarica, I have two questions for you: Why were you unable to attend our forum, or at least send a representative? Both the Liberals and NDP thought it important enough to attend. I'd like to know, why didn't you? Please, today, will you accept these tapes from me of that forum so that you can hear what you missed and maybe you might recognize the need for parent groups, now in these changing times, like Mothers and Fathers for Education. Would you accept that for me today, please?

Mr Skarica: Sure.

1510

Ms Susan Gliddon: I'm just going to say a few words. First of all, thank you for the opportunity to present. I am the mother of two school-aged children who found it necessary to join with other concerned parents when I discovered that our son would be segregated from his grade 4 peers as a result of last year's massive cuts in funding to our local school board. Legislation such as Bill 104 will surely keep parents like myself involved with grass-roots groups like Mothers for Education.

Bill 104 states that it is An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system. I would like to hear how fewer boards with drastically fewer representatives covering much larger areas will begin to be more accountable or effective. It would appear that the mandate of those elected will be broadened but that their ability to make timely or meaningful decisions will be considerably curtailed. If trustees are doing their job they more than earn the small salaries they are paid here in the north. If we want knowledgeable, dedicated people working on our behalf, they deserve to be compensated for their efforts, which brings me to school councils.

On page 16 of Bill 104 the idea of strengthening school councils is mentioned. Some schools had difficulty setting up the recently mandated school councils. Most parents work and are busy people. The parents who sit on school councils are concerned and caring people, but they are volunteers. How much time can you expect from them? How long do you expect them to volunteer for? One year, two years? Where will the continuity of knowledge come from?

Parents volunteer because they have a little bit of time to contribute. They want to help out. I would like to think

that our schools will continue to be managed by accountable individuals paid to be there and oversee our schools, accepting input from concerned parents, but not run by a cluster of volunteers who in all likelihood want to improve their child's school environment, not manage a school environment of 200 to 500 children.

The introduction to Bill 104 goes on to say that an Education Improvement Commission will be established to oversee the transition to a new system. I didn't know our education system was broken. Despite the financial constraints that our board has faced with a 30% reduction in provincial grants over the last five years and an \$8.3-million cut last year, our board has worked hard to manage with the funds it has. A consortium was initiated with the Lakehead separate board to maximize the two boards' buying power. Transportation routes have been continuously reviewed and revamped. Class sizes have been increased. Programs have been cut — many programs. Schools closed and some amalgamated. The list goes on. I'm sure you've heard all this before.

As a mother of a child requiring one-on-one support to attend, let alone experience some measure of success in school, I am very aware that our system is far from perfect. Certainly there is room for improvement. There is always room for improvement. But I would hasten to add that I do not think our educational system should be dismantled. I think that if this government truly wants to make positive change, improvements, it would be sharing its ideas with those in the education system who have dedicated their working lives towards education, and parents who are willing to volunteer their ideas. There seems to be precious little opportunity for people to share their ideas or their concerns. These hearings are a good example of that. Time lines are very short.

As a point of interest, I noticed that four staunch Conservatives were granted one hour's time between them to speak while the Lakehead Board of Education was allowed 15 minutes to present its platform. We salute the opposition for pointing this out and addressing this issue. As this bill is a Conservative one, one would think that perhaps this might be the time to listen to opposing views.

In conclusion, our education system is far too important to dismantle. Public education is important. I do not want to see us moving towards a system of private or charter schools. Thank you, those of you who took the time to listen to me.

Ms Kazia Picard: As a student, it is fortunate I have an opportunity to speak here, because despite the fact it is about us, we are not given a say in our education. Now you'll know first hand what is happening. Mr Snobelen has certainly created the crisis in education he said he would.

It started in elementary school. As I got older, field trips stopped. I missed out on home economics and shop. In grade 8 there was no music program when music has, in tests, been proven to help math and reading development. My classes today are so large I do not know who is on the other side of my classroom and in some of my classes I've sat on buckets, heaters and floors for weeks.

I see students struggling with no special ed and exceptional students not exceeding as they should. So how can

the government say students are not affected when they are not in the system nor have they bothered to consult the people who are? How are the cuts and amalgamations of Bill 104 supposed to help us when they have nothing to do with a better education and everything to do with money, money and power over how things are run in my education?

I see, after these changes are implemented, students with even less say and the government with more control to cut money and cut our education. The Harris government tells me this is being done to cut taxes — the Common Sense Revolution — and that they hear people saying they wish this to be done. I'm telling you these things should be less important than the public education we all benefit from.

I may not have the legal right to make my vote according to these issues, but I do have a right to a fair and equal education, yet our education will be anything but equal if we are to have such diverse regions with so many different needs. In the north we have costs of snow removal and transportation that may not be addressed accurately by an out-of-touch or distant school trustee.

This makes it obvious that what is being proposed in Bill 104 is not at all for the benefit of the schools or students. Money was taken into account of the geographic, social or cultural differences. At this point, the Minister of Education, John Snobelen, is so removed from education that we must make ourselves as students heard and understood so that he may not dictate to us what is happening to our education any longer.

I am here desperately trying to keep my education from dissolving into a system where the gap between the Tory government's and the students' reality is so wide that the government does not understand what is going on.

The Chair: Could I ask you to wrap up, please.

Ms Picard: It is also evident that the Conservative government did not look into any alternative programs but chose to slash and gouge into my education. Mr Snobelen is doing this as a person who is supposedly educated? What I find more offensive than your lack of consultation is that never are we directly informed of changes, and when we attempt to find out more we learn that facts are biased or untruthful, and figures are blurry and not specific. It seems to me that from the beginning the Minister of Education has been denying us knowledge.

I would like to direct this to the Minister of Education, though he may not be here. When you see us, look at what you are doing to your future as well as mine. When you cut art, you lose culture. When you cut music, you lose the heart to help you learn. When you cut programs like parenting, you jeopardize a generation. When you cut phys ed, you have poor health and built-up aggression. When you cut drama, you cannot communicate.

Back to basics may produce logical fingers, but that will result in a nation of machines ignorant of human feeling and morality. Then we'll be perfect candidates to replace a man such as you, Mr Snobelen, and then you'll be jobless, sick, alienated, numb and without anyone to assist you. You are forming your future now when you are proposing this bill, so listen to us, though you haven't before; for once, listen to us.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Rizzi and Ms Gliddon.

Interruption.

The Chair: Order, ladies and gentlemen, no. I would ask you please not to applaud or interject in any way. You really are shortening the time other people have available to speak. I also in particular want to thank Kazia for her eloquent presentation.

Ms Lankin: Madam Chair, while we received copies of a significant number of letters and attachments with the Mothers for Education presentation, there was not a printed version of Ms Gliddon's or Kazia's. I noted they had a copy. Perhaps we could ask the clerk to obtain copies and to circulate them. I didn't receive them.

The Chair: We'll do that and make sure it's circulated if there's one available.

1520

FORT FRANCES-RAINY RIVER
ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL
TEACHERS' FEDERATION;
FORT FRANCES-RAINY RIVER
WOMEN TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION;
FORT FRANCES-RAINY RIVER
ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS'
FEDERATION

The Chair: May I call upon Sharon Preston, Ray Maynard and Rudolf Zeithofer. Welcome, and thank you very much for being here. You have 15 minutes for your presentation.

Mr Rudolf Zeithofer: We'd like to thank the committee for allowing us to speak to you today. I'm Rudolf Zeithofer with the OSSTF. I'd like to introduce my colleagues Sharon Preston of the federation of women teachers, and Ray Maynard, OPSTF.

We're the delegation from Ontario's other time zone. We'd like to start off by saying that we think Bill 104 is great if your goal is to get ordinary people involved in the political process, because that's what it's doing.

Bill 104 is one of the most contentious pieces of legislation Ontario has seen in sometime. There have been many demonstrations against this bill by a variety of groups: teachers, parents, education workers and others concerned with the future of our education system. Countless letters, postcards and fax messages have been sent to the Minister of Education and Training about this bill, and I'll bet the government members here have seen plenty of that too. Numerous petitions have been signed and delivered and more are in the works.

Why are so many of Ontario's citizens agitated over this bill? A glance at this proposed legislation does not provide the answer, nor does a thorough reading of the bill shed any more light on what sparks this intense opposition to the bill. The bill itself is a rather innocuous document, surprisingly so for having engendered so much passion in so many, as we saw here moments ago. The truth, quite frankly, is that people are agitated not so much over what Bill 104 does as they are over what Bill 104 might do. This, I put it to the members of this committee, is the essence of what makes this bill a deeply flawed piece of legislation.

As the preamble states, this is An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system, but given the contents of this bill, how would this bill accomplish that?

Ontario presently has a public education system that works. The high quality of our graduates, among whom I trust I can include members of this committee, attests to that. The Premier himself has gone on record as saying that the high quality of education in Ontario is one major reason Ontario is a good place to invest. Having said that, I'm sure no one here would be averse to any improvement that might be made to Ontario's school system, and we certainly aren't. But before we tinker or indeed do a major overhaul on a system that everyone agrees already works well, we should have a clear idea of how we will accomplish that goal and what that goal is. Would you let a mechanic work on your car if he or she couldn't give you a clear idea of what the end result would be? I think you would be very reluctant, especially if your car already worked well.

This law is just too vague. It creates district school boards without clearly stating how district school boards will provide a better education than the current system. It creates the Education Improvement Commission without stating clearly what the ultimate goals of the commission are to be. How will the Education Improvement Commission know when they have accomplished their task successfully? How will we know? Since the bill does not clearly state what the ultimate aims are beyond the vague term "improvement," how can we be certain that what they will do will be in the best interests of education in Ontario? How can we be certain that what they do will indeed be an improvement if we are not sure what they are going to do?

The bill refers, for example, to "strengthening the role of school councils over time." I don't think anybody would disagree with that, but please tell me, clearly and explicitly, what "strengthening the role" means. What is the ultimate role envisioned for school councils once they have been strengthened? This bill does not say. How then can you propose to enact legislation without having a clear idea of what the end result of that legislation will be?

The bill refers to "increasing parental involvement in education governance," but does not give any indication of what form this parental involvement would take. This amounts to a *carte blanche* to the Minister of Education and Training and the Education Improvement Commission to order things as they see fit. The bill should clearly say what role parents are to play in education governance. It's only sensible.

I don't mean to keep going about in circles, but I think you now understand why I refer to this as a flawed piece of legislation. In order for a law to be effective it must, above all, be clear in its intentions and how the mechanism of the law will accomplish those aims. This bill fails to do that and fails badly. This bill, for example, hands a great deal of power to the Education Improvement Commission. Shouldn't the law clearly spell out what they are supposed to do? When the Legislature delegates power to any official, board or other institution, it clearly defines the parameters of how that board or official can and should function. Why is this legislation different?

The noted English jurist Sir Edward Coke is famous for saying, "Reason is the life of the law; nay, the common law itself is nothing else but reason.... The law, which is perfection of reason." Only a lawyer would actually say that, but I think you get the idea. I put it to you that this bill is unreasonable. I ask not that you defeat this bill, not at all; I only ask that you improve this bill so that it clearly states what it intends to accomplish and how the attainment of that end will be an improvement to our current system. This can only be accomplished by withdrawing this bill from consideration and redrafting it in its entirety.

Before we get on to what the bill actually does, let's make sure we know what it does or what it's going to do. You cannot in good conscience approve this bill simply because you would not be at all certain what you would be endorsing. Law is order, and good law is good order. This law substitutes vagueness for the order we expect in a good law. It is a bad bill. Please make it better before you make it a law.

I teach a grade 11 writing class. One of the things I'm constantly harping at my students about is to be specific and be clear; don't be vague. If they handed me this, I would give it back to them and I would say: "Clearly state what your goal is. What will it look like when it's finished?" If you're going to build a house, even a doghouse or a birdhouse, you know what it's going to look like before you begin building it. What's education in Ontario going to look like when we're finished rebuilding it or improving it? If it's better, I don't have a problem with that, but I'd like to know what it's going to look like.

Mrs Sharon Preston: On to the specifics. The Lieutenant Governor in Council: Bill 104 gives the Lieutenant Governor in Council, that is the cabinet, *carte blanche* power over our education system, as well as the future of our children and all education personnel. Decisions can be made behind closed doors with no provision for discussion with or input by those affected. These decisions will impact on individuals, groups and communities with no representation by the same. The potential costs to people's present and future lives are very real. To disregard these personal costs is both callous and irresponsible. No one here would sign a blank contract and allow the details to be filled in later. Why are we being told we must do this very thing with our education system?

The orders in council are final and shall not be reviewed or questioned by a court. Having no appeal process for such orders gives the Ontario public less recourse than someone who has been sentenced as a criminal in the eyes of the court. What vile things have the people of Ontario done to be granted less democracy than someone who has broken the laws of the land?

This ruling replaces democracy with dictatorship. That is very frightening. As citizens of a democracy, we must always protect and maintain our right to review and question the decisions of those in power. It is our right and our responsibility. It is disrespectful to the people of Ontario to tell them that they must accept such restrictions on their democratic rights.

The impact of amalgamation and privatization: Amalgamation and privatization directives will impact on our

communities. Such initiatives will result in lost jobs and decrease in salaries. Both will mean less purchasing power at the municipal level. In small communities like those in the north, the economic impact will be considerable. Job flexibility in small communities is very limited. The economic losses will be long-term.

1530

The comprehensive education plan: The people of Ontario are being asked to accept funding cuts and restructuring without a comprehensive education plan being in place. Teachers must have day plans that clearly define objectives as well as long-range plans for the year. In asking for a detailed education plan, we are asking for nothing more from the minister than he demands from every teacher each working day.

The minister's pat answers of making education more accountable and efficient are non-answers. Published, well-formed and detailed plans are necessary. They are needed so the public can predetermine whether or not the government is proceeding in an acceptable direction with our public education system before any further restructuring is done.

The Education Improvement Commission: Bill 104 sets up the Education Improvement Commission to make recommendations to the Minister of Education and Training on a number of items. This commission is perceived as having almost magical powers as a transition medium. It will be able to answer all questions and create solutions for all education woes. It apparently can do no wrong. It can recommend giving or taking or placing at will, without being accountable for its actions. Despite the many-splendoured thing that the commission is billed as being, we have objections with the commission on several fronts:

(a) The commission members are appointed by the government. Their salaries will be paid by an employer which has already stated that it is looking for ways to save money. We can then infer that this commission will be seeking outcomes which support the boss's wishes. You don't bite the hand that feeds you. We sense a conflict of interest here.

(b) Bill 104 restricts the discussion to only allow the Education Improvement Commission to look for ways to promote and facilitate the privatization of some education services. Such a directive by the government does not allow for even an illusion of freedom of choice for the Education Improvement Commission.

The Minister of Education and Training is facilitating this privatization initiative by declaring specific education services and costs to be outside the classroom. The direction in which the Education Improvement Commission is being told to move is fairly evident.

Government control, to realize government pre-conceived outcomes, appears to be the motivating factor, rather than democracy, responsibility to the electorate and quality education.

Mr Ray Maynard: The northwest portion of Ontario is a vast expanse of territory which is purported to be larger than France. To put such a large region under the governance of one school board is surely not in the best interests of anyone. Presumably this board would be located somewhere near the middle of the district, which

would make it a two- to four-hour drive away from any of the more populated towns.

The communities and schools in the northwest are as unique as their settings. There are towns such as Fort Frances and Rainy River whose citizens are as apt to eat in the USA as they are in Canada. On the other end of the spectrum there are towns like Red Lake that are situated at the end of the road — beyond this point there be dragons, or at least no paved roads.

At first glance, many of the communities in the north appear to be one-industry towns. However, if one is willing to dig a little deeper, the unique history and character of each town become apparent. Within each town there is a sense of pride and a unique way of getting things done. This uniqueness is not tied into a particular philosophy. Instead, it is tied into the people, the individual citizens who make up the community. It is not what you know in a northern town that gets things done, it is whom you know. The personal contacts that you are able to make with people will get things accomplished. A wide range of issues, from transportation problems to emergency repairs, can be sorted out quickly when there is personal contact.

Living in a small town, one becomes aware of the sense of ownership that local citizens have towards their community buildings such as schools, arenas and auditoriums. This sense of ownership develops through years of involvement with various organizations that use them. Schools are often the buildings to which there is the greatest attachment, most likely because the greatest number of people have had affiliation with them.

It is quite common to call on a former student of a school to make a presentation to a class. It is equally common to make a request for donations towards refurbishing part of the school. In these towns, the response to such requests is most often very generous, because the people feel a genuine sense of ownership. These donations may not be strictly altruistic. There is often a degree of selfishness, that a child or grandchild of the donor will most likely benefit from the donation. Often the donations are not money, but service. A carpenter's volunteer services can go a long way towards making the much-needed bookshelves a reality.

Placing the decision-making body in a distant community will drastically reduce this sense of ownership. This will in turn reduce the community commitment to the school. Without the support of our local citizens, our local community schools will no longer flourish. A distant body may decide that a small school is not needed, based strictly on numbers. These sorts of decisions do not take into account the needs or wishes of the local community. Through local cooperation and pooling of resources, the local citizens may have preserved their community school, but this decision would no longer be in their control.

The Chair: Thank you very much for appearing here. The time is always too short. We wish there were more of it. Thank you for sharing your concerns with us.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair —

The Chair: Could I call the next presenter while you speak. I believe it's Andrew Horsfield. Mrs McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you. I'm sitting here and, I won't take but a moment, but I'm getting increasingly concerned about whether we're going through a sham process here. I say that because I hear people coming forward with their concerns, with a real need to make the members of the committee understand the realities of the northern boundaries of the board that are proposed. We heard the same thing yesterday in Ottawa. We'll hear it again tomorrow in Sudbury.

I know that at the same time the members of the EIC who aren't yet appointed, legally, are having their own hearings, meeting with boards. We've already heard that referenced a couple of times today. I understand that they have maps up on the walls showing board boundaries. Whether they're the same board boundaries that people are coming here to express their concern about, I don't know.

My concern is, is this process going to serve any purpose at all if the people who are going to be advising the Lieutenant Governor in Council are not privy — or we don't know that they're privy — to the concerns that are being raised here? I'm presenting it as a problem that I would like the parliamentary assistant — I'm not going to make a motion. I don't want to be controversial and take time. If you would consider that if this legislation passes, post-amendments or whatever scenario might come forward, it seems to me reasonable that the EIC, if it exists by law after this vote is taken, meet with the members of this committee so that they can be apprised of what we have heard and we can understand what they have taken from all the concerns that have been presented in these hearings.

Mr Skarica: That's an excellent suggestion. Perhaps our subcommittee could meet with the EIC once we're done these hearings. I have some of the presentations here, actually, and notes regarding boundaries.

Mrs McLeod: Or the full committee, perhaps.

Mr Skarica: Certainly.

Ms Lankin: I think that is a useful suggestion. I would like to ask the parliamentary assistant if there's a possibility of taking that a step further. We will of course be spending a day next week on clause-by-clause, and at some point it would be helpful to know the government's intentions. Many of these issues that are being addressed are contained within regulations and there may be the possibility of an amendment which would actually bring some of this into legislation and allow us as a committee to do the work which reflects the concerns that have been heard through these public hearings. I'm sure there would be a willingness to work on a tripartite basis to draw up an acceptable amendment to achieve that goal if it was something the government would be open to.

Perhaps I'd put that forward as a suggestion and ask you to give it consideration. I think that while the EIC has work and that may be an appropriate approach without it being in the legislation, this committee has much of the expertise and has listened to many of the people, has heard the representations directly and could at least take a first attempt at responding to the concerns that have been heard.

Mr Skarica: I'll take that back to the minister.

1540

ANDREW HORSFIELD

The Chair: Mr Horsfield, welcome. Thank you for being here.

Mr Andrew Horsfield: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you very much for allowing me to speak to you today. In some ways I'm not exactly sure why I'm here. You see, I don't belong to any group directly affected by these changes. I'm not a teacher, a trustee, a union member, a janitor, politician or anything like that, nor is anybody in my family. The truth is, I don't even have any children in school — soon, hopefully. I'm just a real estate agent from Thunder Bay. When I heard that you were coming here, that you were travelling about seeking opinions on Bill 104, I began to think seriously about just who would be applying to speak to you. So many groups and organizations are going to seek to help you form an opinion, so for what it's worth, here's what I think.

I think you are going to be told by speakers far more eloquent than I about the importance of trustees and administrations and local representation and school boards and the imminent collapse of the system and a million other arguments that only serve to defend the status quo. But in my books, and I should add, in the books of the people I talk to every day, there's not one trustee nor one school board nor even one administrator, for that matter, who is as important as a child's education in the classroom.

These defenders of their self-made empires will assail you from all sides, speaking all the time of their concern for the education of children, when really their primary objective is to protect their own turf. I'm asking you to be courageous, to stand up to these power brokers of the system and say, "Enough is enough." Think of our children and think what they are going to face in the future. The days are long gone when Ontario's children could compete without an education. If you don't have a good education, you can forget about meaningful employment. Let's spend our limited money in the classroom and not on administrators, directors and politicians.

Bill 104 proposes a change in taxation. It seems to me that a move that streamlines the collection of taxes, that will eliminate bureaucratic duplication, will put more money where it belongs. Who knows? Maybe there is an argument that can be made that somehow it makes economic sense to have all these different school boards collecting different taxes at their own expense, but I just can't see it.

As I understand it, this bill will remove the power of taxation from these multiple school boards all over the province and we'll have one agency collecting taxes and distributing the money according to the need and the cost of the education in the region. It seems so simple. The money saved on administrative costs alone should be staggering, so let's take that money and put it to better use. Let's spend that money giving our children the tools they need to compete in the future.

While I'm on the subject of taxes, I'm a real estate agent. I see people trying to buy their first home all the time, or families trying to get just a little bit more room for themselves. Ladies and gentlemen, there is absolutely

no way you can raise residential taxes any higher to cover costs. People are dying out there. Our education system is one of the most expensive in the world and yet our children are not the best educated. That proves the answer is not more money, and believe me, there is no more money. We — you — have to find a way to spend what we have more effectively. This bill is part of the answer.

Furthermore, any move that reduces the number of politicians anywhere in this province is okay by me — nothing personal. I have nothing against trustees. I assume that they are hard-working, dedicated individuals. We just have far too many. I know that not all trustees earn \$50,000 a year and have personal secretaries and supplied cars, but some do. Let's take the average trustee, the trustee who earns about \$7,000 a year. "Only \$7,000," you say. "Come on, that's peanuts in a big system like ours." That's the problem. For too long we've been saying that's only \$7,000. Where I come from, and the people I talk to, \$7,000 is a sizeable chunk of money. If we don't watch the pennies, what happens to the dollars?

Seven thousand dollars represents two, maybe three, computers into a classroom. How many kids is that going to service? Or maybe it's about one eighth of a teacher's salary to reduce the size of the class. That's the way we should be thinking. That's what \$7,000 represents: more teachers, more classroom supplies, more computers, whatever. Given the choice between paying a politician or putting more teachers and supplies into the classrooms, I'll take the teachers every time.

I have always wondered why trustees seem so involved in administrative duties. I thought they were elected to set policy, to guide, to be leaders, yet we have elected trustees involved in day-to-day matters such as union negotiations, the selection of principals and vice-principals, sports committees and other individual programs. Not only should this be the domain of the paid professionals in administration, but it sets up a massive potential conflict of interest. Trustees are often voting on the future of their spouses. This practice will be stopped under Bill 104, leaving trustees free to be the policy setters, not daily managers.

Stephen Covey discussed leadership versus management. He said to imagine a company cutting its way through a rain forest. The workers are busily hacking away at vines and trees. The management stands back, organizes the work crews, the breaks, the sharpening of the axes. The leader is the individual who climbs the highest tree, looks around and says, "Oops, wrong forest." We're in the wrong forest. We've been steadily heading deeper into it for 25 or 30 years.

Furthermore, I certainly like the idea of more parental input as proposed by the advisory school councils. Concerned parents should be the backbone of the system, not an accessory that is told what is best for their children by so-called experts. I would want to know what my child is learning, at what rate my child is learning and whether my children are being prepared for the world they will face in the future.

In real estate we are taught the importance of goals. In order for a goal to be effective, it must be written down on paper and it must have a time limit attached to it, otherwise it's simply a wish and a dream. How can we

ask our children to achieve goals without a clear understanding of what those goals are? If the idea of a clear and consistent standard, as proposed in Bill 104, frightens some teachers and administrators — maybe they're afraid they might be held accountable if a kid graduates from high school and can't read — then maybe it's about time.

The first thing Confederation College here in Thunder Bay does is test all the incoming students to see if they can read and write. Many fail. They're forced to take a basic English course, yet they're graduates of high school. It shouldn't even be an issue, but it is, and that's pretty sad.

A consistent standard and testing throughout Ontario should allow us to pinpoint problem areas and move to address those areas quickly. Through the advisory school councils, parents will be better informed about their children's learning and hopefully will help their children succeed academically.

I realize I don't have much time left, but there are just a couple of other points I'd like to emphasize. In my daily work I talk with real people from all walks of life. I've been raising this issue with them, very gently, I might add, because it's not usually a good idea to discuss politics with potential clients, but I have, in an unscientific effort to get their thoughts. To be honest, most know absolutely nothing about this bill, or they maybe have a general idea. But after we talk a little bit, I find that most everyone seems to agree that this bill is pointing our education system in the right direction. We're finally in the right forest for a change.

The people I know have bills to pay, be it a mortgage or car loan or credit card. Most everyone is struggling, especially the younger families. We truly understand the concept of no more money. We can't just vote ourselves a raise because we don't want to cut back our lifestyle. This fact seems to have escaped too many politicians before now. People really believe that Ontario's education system has repeatedly raised taxes and cut costs at the bottom, in the classrooms where it does the most harm to the students.

Maybe this response to shrinking budgets is designed to create as much damage as possible in some vain hope of increased funding. Who knows? What we do know is that this bill will reduce the political element in our school system and save money at the same time. It will put in place a system that just may be able to rein in spiralling costs. It will increase the potential for parental involvement. It will create an environment that will allow scarce dollars to move from useless, redundant administrative and political functions and hopefully be spent where it counts: for the kids in the classroom. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Horsfield. You went right to the limit. I thank you for coming and sharing your views with us.

LAKEHEAD, GERALDTON AND NORTH OF SUPERIOR ROMAN CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARDS

The Chair: Next are the North of Superior, Geraldton and Lakehead Roman Catholic separate school boards: Carole Weir, Kevin Debnam and Joleene Kemp.

Welcome. Thank you for coming before us.

Mrs Joleene Kemp: We're just going to put a map up.

The Chair: We're very fond of visual aids in this committee.

Mrs Kemp: Actually, you can't have this one because we found out yesterday, just around 4 o'clock, that we were able to come and make a presentation to you. As a result, you'll have a copy of this sent down to you so that you may use it, but for your information, this is already with Mrs Vanstone and Mr Cooke. They already have a copy of it because they have already been here and have spoken to us. We want to make sure that we're succinct and that you see exactly what we're talking about, so we have a map that demonstrates the Catholic district board number 34 up there for you.

This afternoon, as part of this presentation, we have the director of the Lakehead separate school board, Kevin Debnam, and we have the director of the north of Superior separate school board, Carole Weir. Guy Legault, who is the superintendent involved with Geraldton-Longlac, has been summoned to Longlac to be part of the native education undertaking that is happening all this week in terms of where they're going to go with their particular issues.

Jack Duhaime, who is the chair of the Geraldton-Longlac board, thought it might be a good idea for him to work today, considering that it's only a six-hour drive in, and that he felt he would be more productive within his own community. Paul Paradis, who is the chair of North of Superior, has just started his new job as CEO of Marathon's Wilson Memorial Hospital and felt that his presence could best be spent dealing with restructuring in health care.

Having said that, we're not here to whine, but we're here to get on with the task that is before us, and that's to look at Bill 104.

1550

Mrs Carole Weir: Good afternoon. The Lakehead, Geraldton and North of Superior Roman Catholic separate school boards are here today as advocates for the 10,000 students we serve in this great region. As Catholic-based organizations, collaboration, consultation and cooperation form the very fabric of who we are as people of God and the manner in which we function as school boards. We applaud the government's commitment to consulting directly with those affected by change and appreciate that finally time was found for us to voice our concerns, with the hope that you will carefully consider and reflect our suggestions in the decisions ahead of you. We are grateful that time was found and we're very aware that we're cutting into your break, which you truly deserve, but want to express our gratitude for listening to us.

Our comments on Bill 104 are selective in nature. We, as representatives of the school boards slated for amalgamation in this part of the province, have chosen to make public statements on a few issues that directly affect the quality of Catholic education in our schools, and accordingly, the children in our classrooms. Our presentation today reflects the unified voice of the three Catholic school boards defined by the proposed legislation as district Catholic school board 34.

Mrs Kemp: Our presentation on Bill 104 is underpinned by four basic principles. It is the unified position

of the three boards that any changes to the educational landscape of northeastern Ontario must be: (1) in the best interests of the children we serve; (2) cost-effective; (3) fiscally realistic for a large geographic area; and (4) socially just.

It is within the framework of these four principles that we present our comments. Before dealing directly with the proposed legislation contained in Bill 104 and its impact on this special part of the province, we wish to situate it within a bigger picture, namely, the massive provincial restructuring of education in Ontario, of which this bill is only one particular part.

The legislative enactments of Bill 104 will improve Ontario's education system only if they are accompanied by legislation which ensures: equitable and improved educational opportunity for all children in the province; respect and justice for all those who provide education; and guarantees for the constitutionally protected rights of our Catholic education system.

Therefore, we recommend that any proposed model of school board amalgamation be in the best interests of the children in the province of Ontario; cost-effective; fiscally realistic for a large geographic area; and socially just.

Mr Kevin Debnam: Therefore Bill 104, in substance and detail, will result in better education only on the condition that:

The government implement its promised new, fair funding model which will achieve equal educational opportunity for children from distant and disparate communities.

Any employees of school boards who are affected by the reduction of the number of boards in the region be dealt with according to clearly defined principles of social justice.

The new funding allocation formula allow local autonomy through flexibility for discretionary spending by Catholic boards in order that they may maintain, foster and develop that specific and distinctive education offered by Catholic schools. This will permit the continued development of distinctive curriculum materials and professional development programs.

The amalgamation of school boards should recognize distinct and different community affinities such as geography, economy, culture, history, and religion; and the size of the school board should permit effective administration and cost-effectiveness in the delivery of educational services with consideration for the additional challenges faced in the area.

We assume that it is not the government's intention to promote size for the sake of size. In our circumstance, a new district school board will comprise 23,000 square kilometres. This could result in inefficiencies and additional costs.

We now draw your attention to the proposed amalgamation of the Geraldton, North of Superior and Lakehead Catholic school boards.

It is the unified position of all three boards represented here today that amalgamation is the preferred option for this part of northwestern Ontario. However, it comes with a pricetag and perhaps some cost savings in the future. We collectively believe that we have the talent, skill and

wherewithal to effect a three-board amalgamation and to do so for the good of our kids, to effect cost savings over time and in a manner that is socially just to our employees.

In order to effect successful amalgamation in this region, our boards require — may I say our boards demand — a four-year phase-in period; a provincially developed and funded human resources package that ensures the fair and just treatment of staff; transitional funding to assist school boards in overcoming defined barriers that could mitigate success; and adequate trustee representation to ensure that new boards reflect the many diverse needs of a larger school board community.

In point of fact, these are conditions upon which we base our unified support for board amalgamation. Without these conditions being met, the boards would be forced to propose alternative models to amalgamation. Accordingly, we forward the following comments and associated recommendations.

Mrs Weir: Amalgamation as a phase-in period from 1997 to 2000: It is our collective position that each Catholic board in District 34 is an equal partner in the amalgamation process. Accordingly, we are not operating on the assumption that the larger Lakehead board will systematically fold the two smaller boards into its current infrastructure and overall operation. Rather, we intend to create a new Catholic school board in the region, one built on a solid foundation of clearly articulated regional needs. These needs will be reflected in the crafting of a new or revised board infrastructure, one which will rise, much like the mythical phoenix, from the ashes of the previous three school boards.

We are confident that if the funding allocation framework is adequate, then the new board infrastructure can be designed to overcome the geographic, climatic, transportation and telecommunication barriers, of which you've heard a lot today, that define the approximately 23,000-square-kilometre area of the proposed district 34.

Mrs Kemp: This is what our board looks like, and this is very real. This doesn't take into account the one- and two-lane highways, the deadend roads, the school communities that exist because of the wherewithal of the Catholic parents. It doesn't take into account the cooperation that exists today that has allowed our Catholic school boards to function and to grow and to survive. It's all there. It's this blank that we're making reference to that is up there, that we show you in terms of what we have and what we don't have. But this is it, minus the faces, minus the realness, and this is what we look forward to in our newly expanded Catholic school board.

Mrs Weir: The magnitude of restructuring proposed under Bill 104 requires careful strategic planning and skilful implementation by those directly affected by this initiative. It is imperative, therefore, that the province recognize that this process will take time. Only in this way will the success of the innovation be assured and the needs of the children we serve in this special part of the province met. Only in this way can our boards work together to help ensure that in the future there will be no second-class students in our schools.

The Chair: Excuse me. I note that you have quite a lengthy brief and you have very few minutes at your

disposal. I wonder if you might want to summarize in some way so that you don't miss some of the points you want to make.

Mrs Weir: We appreciate your help. Thank you. The recommendation, you can see, is a reiteration of what we just said, so we'll move on to social justice.

Mr Debnam: In the area of social justice, without going into all the details, we are a Catholic-based organization. Many of the basic principles upon which we function are dictated by the Catholic church. The social justice issues that we try to implement and live out on a daily basis and that context are clearly defined by the bishop of the diocese of Thunder Bay. The area of social justice, without getting into the details, is one that is near and dear to our hearts. We want to ensure that our recommendations in terms of the fair treatment of staff are heard.

More specifically, we have a recommendation that states that the province develop and fund a comprehensive, four-year human resources package that ensures the just and fair treatment of staff affected by school board amalgamation; that the human resources package contain, among other components, the provision for training, upgrading of skills, counselling, redeployment assistance, early retirement incentive plans and voluntary early exit packages; and that this package be made available to all staff over the course of the four-year implementation phase.

Mrs Weir: Another recommendation I will précis for you, as we have written it out, is with regard to transitional funding. You've heard expressed eloquently today some of the concerns of people who live in this region. In order to put amalgamation into the process, we must have a four-year provincial transition fund that will help us. The recommendation is that the province create such a fund to assist us in overcoming the regional barriers that are present.

Mrs Kemp: We're looking for the minimum number of trustees to be increased to seven and that the formula for determining the number of trustees on a district school board include factors such as geography, urban density and population scarcity. This is very real for the people in the communities that we presently are called to serve.

We began this brief by saying that the Catholic school boards slated for amalgamation would work hard to ensure a successful board amalgamation; we did so by articulating very carefully principles upon which we feel we can do this because we are called to serve and, in doing so, we serve our children, because we believe in our future. You have it there before you. You will receive a copy of the detailed map which lists the inefficiencies that are there. We will also begin to cost for you some of the basic areas that will have to be upgraded and provided, which each presenter has discussed in his or her presentation, specifically the areas of technology, upgrading and hopefully something done to highways so that we can communicate face to face with the parents of the children we serve.

We thank you very much for allowing us this opportunity. We only wish you had the time to come into our schools and see what's going on in Nakina, Marathon,

Manitouwadge and Thunder Bay, what has in fact happened, because then you could begin to appreciate what we are talking about and the passion with which we carry out our call to service.

The Chair: Thank you. We appreciate the passion with which you have stated your position here today and

we regret that we're not able to go into every school. On behalf of the committee I thank you, and we look forward to the additional information you will send us.

We are recessed until 4:30.

The committee recessed from 1605 to 1630.

Report continues in volume B.

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| Mr Michael | Gravelle (Port Arthur L) |
| Mr Howard | Hampton (Rainy River ND) |
| Mr Frank | Miclash (Kenora L) |

Clerk / Greffière: Ms Tonia Grannum

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Mardi 18 mars 1997

**Standing committee on
social development**

**Comité permanent des
affaires sociales**

Fewer School
Boards Act, 1997

Loi de 1997 réduisant
le nombre de conseils scolaires



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Tuesday 18 March 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES
AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Mardi 18 mars 1997

Report continued from volume A.
1630

FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS ACT, 1997
LOI DE 1997 RÉDUISANT
LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Continued consideration of Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / *Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système, en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.*

HOWARD WHENT

The Chair: I would call the meeting to order and call Howard G. Whent. Thank you very much for being here, Mr Whent. We look forward to your presentation. You have 10 minutes.

Mr Howard Whent: I notice all the committee is not here yet. I hope their coffee is over quickly.

First off, I'm not too sure what role I'm in. I'm an educator and a parent and a taxpayer and a concerned citizen, all those things. I won't apologize for being here out of special interest, and if somebody wants to characterize that as a special interest group, my kids are, thank you very much.

I live with my family in the town of Wawa, in the township of Michipicoten, some 500 kilometres away. Education has undergone many changes and will continue to evolve. The Minister of Education and Training has stated that the proposed changes will make the education system more accountable and create equal opportunities for all students. This statement could have been made by Mr Davis, Mr Robarts or even Mr Frost. That's where I end the comparison.

Bill 104 is part of a package of bills that the government claims is aimed at restructuring the relationship between various levels of government and the citizens of the province. These changed relationships will, I believe,

divide this province along social, economic and regional grounds as never before. It is not the kind of society I or any caring citizen would want to have as a legacy.

Bill 104 is more significant because of what it does not say. There are too many unanswered questions. Yes, the taxpayers will not be paying education taxes, maybe. Business, commercial and industrial educational taxes will continue to be paid, not for local education, but to the provincial treasury. Will every dollar collected be directed towards education? What process will be used to set these rates? Will this process be subject to a strong business, commercial, industrial lobby?

The ministry report entitled *A Report on School Board Spending 1995 to 1996* used the median per pupil spending as a basis of comparison. There have been a lot of presentations today that handled a lot of regional concerns, and I think they have been well presented. I'm interested in my community and my kids. A document entitled "Redistributing Education Wealth in Ontario — the Winners and Losers," which I believe came from a trustees' association magazine, also used the same basis of comparison. It says the amalgamated Algoma district would lose about \$1 million. Most of this would come from the schools in Wawa. We could lose 16.5% of our teachers, class sizes at the elementary level could increase between 20% and 30%, and many programs and high school options would be ended.

The new funding model must differentiate the needs of small communities with few schools from urban centres that have more flexibility in assigning staff and redistributing student loads.

My community has been impacted negatively and will continue to be so. We have 4,600 people. The impact, and this is in the appendix, will be equivalent to hitting Toronto with a couple of billion dollars out. I suggest you take a look at those numbers.

"Accountable": Accountable for what and how and to whom?

"Governance" means "exercise of authority, direction, control." The Education Act assigns specific responsibilities to various individuals and groups. Does Bill 104 give the minister the power to amend the Education Act through regulation? An example of this would be giving to school councils some of the governance responsibilities now assigned to a principal.

"Accountable" means "liable to be called to account, responsible." The Ontario College of Teachers has the power to hold teachers accountable for their responsibilities. There is no parallel process in place to hold anyone else accountable for their responsibilities as defined in the Education Act. Bill 104 goes one step further in exempting from liability the Education

Improvement Commission and its appointed committees as long as they are acting in good faith. Try to prove that in a court of law.

Educational bureaucracy is viewed by some as self-serving, unresponsive and élitist. Will this new governance model make the system more accountable? The process towards this new system is to be totally controlled by the EIC and its guidelines or by regulation. What mechanisms will exist to ensure that these measures are fair and reflect the needs of all the stakeholders? Bill 104 proposes none.

My understanding is that local improvement committees are to be composed of board chairs and administrative personnel from each of the existing boards. Some of these members would have a problem and I understand their concern. They would be dealing with organizational models which could include the elimination of some of their own positions. I have heard that teachers and parents and possibly students may be allowed to sit on subcommittees to make reports, but with no decision-making input whatsoever. The composition of the committees should be representative and conflict-of-interest guidelines instituted.

Decisions within the new districts — this to me is the heart of the whole thing — will have to be made at three levels: the school level, the local community level and the district level. The types of decisions to be made, and at which level, must be decided first, followed by an organization of personnel to satisfy the need; in other words, what gets done by whom. I think it's dangerous to put in place people in positions of authority without responsibility. As soon as you do that, you now have a power trip on your hands. There could be a case made for retaining some administrative presence in each of the affected small board areas. There is no assurance that each of the small boards would even be given a trustee.

The balance of power between elected trustees and bureaucrats will be changed. Bill 104 will create a more bureaucratic system. Trustees will find it more difficult to make informed decisions. Boards may become rubber-stamp organizations. Administrators will be making decisions with the pressure of knowing that the EIC is looking over their shoulders. Valid concerns could get lost in a bureaucratic jungle.

The Ministry of Education and Training does not now have enough personnel to fulfil its mandate, and I can tell you as a practising teacher the number of times we wait months and years for material to come from the ministry. What will the additional cost be for the increased central bureaucracy?

Why is it necessary for the EIC to maintain a mandate until the end of the year 2000? If the reason is that it will take this long to work out all the problems, then it is obvious that the implementation date of January 1, 1998, is far too soon for the new school districts. Children could be hurt by decisions made in haste. The real reason has everything to do with the government's desire to extract more money from the system and to make these decisions without public scrutiny. This suggests that the government will be making decisions which will be detrimental to public education.

Public education will not be well served by Bill 104. You cannot expect change to work in an atmosphere of uncertainty and mistrust. Educators, classroom support people, parents, students and administrators have to feel that they are part of this change, not the target of it. My children and all our children demand that their needs not be subordinated to the perceived political need of any political party.

In the addendum, just to comment, if there is a reshuffling of things, I think your timetable is out of whack, it's far too quick, and things are going to fall through the holes. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Whent. You used up all of your time. We thank you for bringing your views to the committee.

LAKEHEAD BOARD OF EDUCATION SCHOOL COUNCIL PROJECT TEAM

The Chair: Could I ask the school council project team, Lakehead Board of Education, Connie Hartviksen and Lyn Walter, to come forward. Welcome to our committee. We look forward to your presentation.

Ms Connie Hartviksen: Good afternoon, members of the panel and all concerned public who are present. We are very pleased to be presenting today and we have a very important message to share that reflects the views and concerns of parents and school council members from the 39 elementary and secondary schools within the Lakehead Board of Education in Thunder Bay. This position also supports the majority opinion of the Lakehead Board of Education regarding Bill 104.

Our names are Lyn Walter and Connie Hartviksen. We are school council chairs within the Lakehead Board of Education, Lyn from the elementary panel and myself from the secondary. We are also on our board's school council project team. Our mandate on the team is to help facilitate school council implementation during the first year and to help them through the growing pains.

In preparation for today, we have contacted each of our 33 elementary and six secondary school councils to inform them of Bill 104 and to get feedback. This has been a major undertaking. This verbal and written report reflects the comments and concerns that were shared with us through this process. The comments have been analysed and grouped into two areas: (1) concerns about how Bill 104 will directly affect school councils, and (2) general concerns school councils have about the implications of implementation of Bill 104 in north-western Ontario.

Ms Lyn Walter: The amalgamation of school boards in northwestern Ontario will result in an unmanageable geographic area for the proposed new jurisdiction, specifically 60,000 square kilometres, with a distance of 520 kilometres between schools on either side of the proposed boundary. That is the same distance apart as Toronto is from Montreal. Combined with the proposed reduction of trustees, this will cripple the ability of the new board to be responsive to local concerns and issues. We cannot expect good local representation for any of the communities affected by this. School councils will not be able to function effectively as an alternative to local

boards of education because they have neither the authority nor the additional resources required to enable them to fulfil an informed role in decision-making at the school level. School boards currently serve a valuable function with an elected responsibility.

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The proposed amalgamation will result in centralization of decision-making about the education of our children. This will inevitably mean that local issues and concerns from parents, teachers, trustees, school councils and students will not be heard, the morale of teachers and volunteers will be destroyed, the quality of education in the classroom will diminish, systemic synergy will be prevented, and issues involving the neediest children will fall through the cracks.

This plan is not feasible for the rural communities in northern Ontario, with schools separated by hundreds of miles and with populations of a few hundred or a few thousand. We face unique and exceptional challenges associated with our northern and rural geographic location, including harsh winters, poor roads and the high costs of doing business at a distance.

Ms Hartviksen: If the ministry's counter to this is to say they'll infuse the north with advanced technology, any of the proposed net gains thought to be recouped through this restructuring plan will evaporate. Fibre-optic cable and telecommunication capabilities are tremendously expensive to put in place, and even once operational are tremendously expensive to use and maintain. Take for example a conference call. A one-hour, four-line conference call in northwestern Ontario will cost \$250. Typically, board meetings run anywhere from two to four hours long, depending on the agenda, and occur twice a month. You are looking at a minimum monthly bill for board meetings alone of \$2,000. Subcommittee work will be a challenge, and those costs will be in addition to regular board meetings. That doesn't even begin to address the problems associated with the questionable effectiveness of audio conferencing.

I'd like to share with you one quote that was provided to us from a school council: "We need to get some of these policymakers up here and squire them around for three days. Drive to Marathon for a meeting, then drive back eating food out of a cooler both ways since \$5,000 isn't going to begin to cover out-of-pocket expenses. Then take them to the eastern end of the district on day two — same drill. Then, after they've managed on a few hours of sleep and soggy food for two days, let's do a northern community on day three. This should happen in the winter when the days are short and the roads are bad, although I fear for anyone driving the highways this time of year."

Ms Walter: Skills, knowledge and expertise are necessary to make effective decisions as a school council. Time and training is necessary to learn how the system works. How will training be coordinated? Take Longlac, for example, a community 291 kilometres and a seven-hour return trip drive from Thunder Bay. Whether school council members come to the central board office or trainers go to them, there will be incredible costs — time, fiscal and human — associated with this. The government committed to in-house training and saw this as integral to

the success of school councils. How do you manage these logistics and ensure access to training for everyone in a board that is 520 kilometres wide and 60,000 square kilometres in area? How will expenses of travel, accommodation and meals be covered when we are told there is no money for school councils? Where will the resources come from to ensure that school council members remain informed, knowledgeable and committed? We are concerned about who this might eliminate. This won't save money in the north.

At the fall forum held in Thunder Bay in October 1996, school council members ranked the need for ongoing communications as the top priority. School councils will not be able to communicate and network throughout such a large geographic area. School councils need intraschool and board support, an appropriate enabling structure to facilitate their mandate, adequate information to perform their duties and a heightened awareness of their role by the public at large. This is critical during the implementation stage and will determine the overall success or failure of school councils. Without financial assistance or a budget for phone, fax, mail, FedEx, teleconferencing, video conferencing, e-mail technology, this is sure to cease. The increased costs for doing business at a distance must be addressed if this government moves forward on this bill.

Ms Hartviksen: As school councils, we are asking, who will let their name stand for trustee when there will be increased accountability for the few remaining trustees, a larger geographic area to be responsible for, increased travel expectations, total chaos in education caused by massive restructuring, more schools to visit, a larger constituent area, loss of real power to effect change, and all for less money?

Considering this government-imposed proposition, there is a genuine possibility that the proposed new school board structure will be less effective. Whether this is real or perceived, we feel that parents and the government will ultimately turn to and focus their attention and expectations on school councils for solutions and answers. The workload will undoubtedly become greater for school councils.

School councils are only at the forming stage. This is very new territory for everyone. It will take time to improve this democratic involvement, and then again, maybe not. Many parents have indicated that they don't want to assume the roles and responsibilities of paid elected trustees. Any fewer trustees for an area this size will have a detrimental effect for students. This will not translate to improved learning. This is a recipe for failure. As the board devolves, local representation will decrease. With fewer trustees and superintendents, boards will be unable to support and monitor school councils. It won't be possible to put the time and energy into the implementation of this new mandate.

With the loss of control, communication and coordination inherent in the changes proposed in Bill 104, school council members are afraid that fragmentation will result as the local board loses its profile and presence. This is the hidden agenda that we are afraid of and will take action to guard against, the hidden agenda behind what Mr Snobelen has had in mind from the beginning: Set up

the system so that school boards will become ineffective and fail, then eliminate them altogether and have school councils take over. We are aware that this has been the recipe other provinces, states and countries have followed to get the charter school concept off the ground and we do not want to go that route.

If we consider the scenario that school councils follow this route and evolve to the point where they become powerful and high-profile, there will be active campaigning for school council positions by single-issue individuals and/or those with personal agendas. This was the same route that was followed in New Brunswick, where school boards were eventually eliminated and replaced with two interim boards that were handpicked by the minister. If we shadow this process in Ontario, we too will fall into the same political trap of favouritism and party politics. We are not flattered and seduced by the government finally giving us our voice in these matters. We have our eyes wide open.

Currently in Ontario there is an 18-member appointed Ontario Parent Council with a \$600,000 budget. This is the official provincial voice for parents to the minister, and yet there are only two appointed parents from northern Ontario. Just yesterday, the Ontario Parent Council issued a press release in support of Bill 104 to strengthen school councils and increase parental involvement in education governance. The Ontario Parent Council has made this statement, and yet who have they consulted?

This isn't the position that the parents and school councils have taken within the Lakehead Board of Education. School councils want elected provincial representation that reflects a regional balance to ensure that our voice is heard. Those of us who are involved are all here because we are real parents of real kids in schools. We know what our children's needs are and we are concerned about the education they need to prosper beyond what we as parents can give them. We are in it for our kids, and we need to be sure that those perspectives are heard provincially. We're not in this for power or political advancement or personal agendas.

Ms Walter: The time commitment is overwhelming —

The Chair: Excuse me just a second. I notice your brief is quite lengthy. You have very few minutes left, so you might want to make some choices.

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Ms Walter: The time commitment is overwhelming for many, as are the new roles and responsibilities suggested for school council members. There are a lot of questions around just how far parents should go re advising, policymaking and implementation of policy.

What will the new role involve and how far will this allow parents to go in these areas? You can't legislate volunteers. How much can you expect of volunteers, most of whom already work full-time? Most parents want involvement in their children's education but few are prepared to take it on as a full-time job for free in their spare time. This will get unmanageable for some, and we are concerned about representativeness and who this will leave.

Many school councils from which we have had feedback expressed concerns about school council members as volunteers and the potential for abuse. As volunteers,

you cannot assume that school council members will do the job of paid trustees. Remember that most school council members work full-time. Both of us have professional full-time jobs, families, and so far, husbands. Our school council involvement has had its effect on all of these. In the last month, between us we have worked over 200 hours. What parents hearing this are going to want to do the same? There have been times lately when we've wondered if we would have to give up our jobs to continue our volunteering.

Ms Hartviksen: There are a number of issues that I hope you will refer to in this document, because I have a feeling we aren't going to get through them; we'll be cut off.

Linked very closely with the volunteer nature of school council membership is the fact that, while we're very busy and we have concerns over just how much time we can continue to commit, the issue of how seriously we're going to be taken is very real. Many parents have told us, "If we're not going to be taken seriously and if we're just going to be window dressing, we're not going to be here for long." That was one major point.

Ms Walter: School councils would be self-funding, with the expectation for training, communication and outreach activities creating awareness that even the sharing of information among school council members and the running of meetings require simple resources that cost money. Currently, our individual schools are pulling this out of their existing budget to the best of their ability and to the detriment of the classroom. There are no other alternatives being offered. An enhanced role for school councils means increased needs and costs. This is bound to become even bigger as parents question limited classroom resources.

Ms Hartviksen: School councils are struggling with the new mandate as it stands without any further change. The concept needs a chance to gel. The progress and success of school councils need to be monitored before downloading any more. Don't change the rules midway through. We aren't even seven months old yet. People are being frightened away. This is a very fragile situation. We understand that a number of research studies are under way in Ontario that have been funded by the Ministry of Education and Training to study school councils. The deadline for submission of some reports is June 30. We suggest that careful attention be paid to those findings. The government should monitor and rethink this situation before it totally dismantles the school board structure.

Ms Walter: Stakeholder representation is currently an issue and needs to be resolved. For example, home and school and parent associations are struggling to find their role in light of the new legislation. They feel they have been eased out or displaced by the politics. They are left to compete for members to remain viable. Currently, many school councils have home and school and parent association members on council to provide a liaison and integration; however, it hasn't been without its challenges. There is also extensive overlap on most councils, with school improvement team members as well as parent council members. All of these parent groups have made tremendous contributions to schools over the years, yet it

is difficult to say at this point whether all these various stakeholders will remain self-sustaining. Where will schools be without the support, hard work and fundraising that these groups have provided in the past?

The Chair: I want to thank you for your presentation. I regret we don't have time for the full text, but the full text will be part of the record. Thank you for sharing your views with us.

Ms Hartviksen: Could we end —

The Chair: We are out of time. There are lots of people who are waiting to be heard.

WARREN HUGHES

The Chair: Our next presenter is Warren Hughes. Welcome. Thank you very much for being here. We're looking forward to your presentation.

Mr Warren Hughes: My name is Warren Hughes. I'm a personal and business planning consultant here in Thunder Bay. I'm also a residential and business taxpayer. I'm also a parent. I'm also very concerned about the education system, just like many others here today.

Several years ago, prior to the last provincial election, Mr Harris and the Progressive Conservative Party tabled a document and asked the voters to decide whether our province should go in the direction of reforming the education system and many other areas. The provincial voters responded overwhelmingly and told Mr Harris to implement his plan and to make Ontario strong again.

As a consultant, I'm a big believer in plans, especially plans that are written and implemented. The election has come and gone. Premier Harris is still keeping his word and implementing the voters' plan: the Common Sense Revolution.

Some say the changes are coming too fast and are too extreme, but I feel the province was out of control due to mismanagement and incompetence and it was time someone put a plan into place to change the direction of Ontario before we were in too deep.

It wasn't long ago, as I'm 34 years old — I can remember being in grade school; I can remember being in high school. I spent six years in college and university. I can look back at the grade school system and say to you that it wasn't flawed, it was broken. After 10 years of studying the education system through many reports from independent education consultants and so on, it's time we take the bull by the horns and start making some changes to the system before it's too late.

I think everyone will agree this afternoon that there's not enough money being spent on students directly. I feel the Fewer School Boards Act is one step towards less administration and more essential services towards our kids. The excellence of education and training will be put first.

Education reform is essential for Ontario's next generation. If my son and your children are to find high-paying, productive jobs in an increasingly competitive global world, we have to take a look at their education system today. Even the federal political parties are now seeing how essential it is and assisting the provincial governments in educating and training a healthy, strong future workforce that supports technology, research and

business development. Their productivity in the future will be Canada's economic future, and this is all at risk if we don't do something about the education system today.

I'd like to touch on a few areas that I feel are important about this act: the reduction of the residential tax burden. If the municipalities that will feel an impact from this tax don't have their houses in order now and can't get them into shape quickly, they should be tossed out as well. People should be looking at their municipal governments very hard to see if they have the right leadership in their local governments.

The reduction of bureaucratic duplication and waste with the elimination of school boards and the number of trustees is a step that I encourage and I think is very positive. Actually, I feel it could be reduced even greater, with more savings to the local taxpayers. Some of the school boards could cover a larger geographic area in southern Ontario.

I also feel the conflict-of-interest guidelines are very appropriate. In this day of special interest groups, some of whom are here today, more people are worried about themselves instead of the whole system.

I also like the advisory school council. I think that's a great way to encourage the parents to get involved in the system. This will strengthen our school system in the future.

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To conclude, I feel that this act is long overdue. The education system has been examined to death. We have to improve our system quickly, and this is one positive step to ensure that we are moving in the right direction. I feel these changes will ensure that our school system moves from 15th place in the ranking of education quality to number one in the future.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Hughes. We have one minute per caucus, and I would like you to stick to that one minute.

Ms Lankin: I'm interested in some of the comments you've made. To a large degree, I would agree with you in terms of the importance of the education system to our country's economic future and cultural future and a lot of those comments. My concern comes when you arrive at a conclusion that this bill is going to achieve that. For example, you say, "The savings as a result of fewer school boards means there will be less money spent on administration and that will be redirected to essential services in the classroom." That's nice language, but we've got no commitment from the government that the savings will be reinvested; in fact, we're expecting even greater cuts than that to the education budget. In the government's own figures, \$150 million is projected to be saved by these amalgamations of school boards. Would you support that only if that money is in fact redirected and spent in the classroom?

Mr Hughes: I never heard the government say they were going to reduce the amount of money allocated for the educational system. Did you? They were going to reduce the entire — I heard redirection, reinvestment, but I never heard cutting.

Ms Lankin: I'm asking you, is your report for this concept predicated on the fact that those savings from

administration, end of duplication etc, are reinvested in the classroom, that that envelope of education spending is sealed? Is that what you're saying to us?

Mr Hughes: I believe that what the bill has tabled before us is something that — as a consultant, we've analysed the education system to death. We have a good plan put in front of us with this Bill 104 and I think it's a step in the right direction to start to tackle this problem of education reform.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr Hughes. I appreciate your candidness and the frankness and sincerity of your presentation.

Governance in education has evolved in the last 20 years from many, many small boards, some 1,500, down to the current model of some 150, and now it's evolving again. What comes up continually — the last two governments have all talked about the role of the parent. It's been philosophically an issue, and parent councils or community councils are a part of that. My question to you is this: Closer level of governments, a parent council working with a district board — do you think this is a workable model in the evolution of school governance?

Mr Hughes: Definitely. Even in some areas of the United States they're made up of advisory boards of local citizens, parents of children in their school system. If we get concerned parents involved in it, the system's only going to be strengthened by their cooperation.

Mrs McLeod: I want to pick up on the question Mr O'Toole just asked; it will be very brief. There was an expression of concern by the parent councils that just presented about the stated public views of the Ontario Parent Council yesterday, which is of course made up of government-appointed members and which is in direct opposition to every presentation we've had from parent councils, including all the umbrella groups of parent councils in Ottawa yesterday, the group representing all of the parent councils in Carleton, the group we've already heard from this afternoon representing 39 school councils in the Lakehead board. If we're going to talk about the role of school councils, let's listen to the views being expressed by the umbrella groups.

Mr Hughes: Do you have a question?

Mrs McLeod: No, sir, I don't. I'm following Mr O'Toole, which is within my prerogative.

Mr Hughes: I thought you were supposed to be asking a question.

The Chair: No. With respect, Mr Hughes, Mrs McLeod can use her time as she wishes.

Ms Lankin: Show us your Tory card.

Mr Hughes: If you want to debate him, go ahead, but if you have a question for me —

The Chair: Mr Hughes, thank you very much for coming and sharing your views with us.

Yes, Mr Duncan?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a question for the parliamentary assistant. Is it the government's opinion that Ontario's education system is the 15th in the world?

Mr Skarica: No.

Mr Duncan: So the information he provided you wouldn't agree with?

Mr Skarica: He's probably referring to some testing of some points. We rank about in the middle, depending on what tests you're talking about. We rank about the middle —

Mr Duncan: Where does the government of Ontario view the ranking of Ontario's education system? I'd be curious to know where these numbers are coming from and the background for them.

Mr Skarica: I can tell you that right now. The recent testing results we're getting show us about average in national results and international results.

Mr Duncan: Yes, I've seen those results, and I've seen results that put us as number one in math and science. I've seen results that rank our graduates going into post-secondary education as among the most competent in the world. I would like the government, in writing, to respond to the question specifically: Where does the government view Ontario's education system vis-à-vis being ranked against other education systems?

Mr Skarica: I can get you statistics on the recent test results both nationally and internationally.

The Chair: Thank you. We appreciate it.

Just for the information of the audience, members of the committee can use the time in whatever way they wish when it is their turn to speak. Mrs McLeod was perfectly in order to make the comment and not ask a question if that's what she chooses to do. That's open to every member, as long as they stick to the time lines, which we are falling behind at the moment.

IGNACE SCHOOL

The Chair: I ask Beverly Hall and Allyson Lyght to come forward, please. Thank you very much for being here. Welcome to the committee. We're most anxious to hear what you have to say.

Mrs Beverly Hall: My name is Beverly Hall. I am the principal of Ignace School in Ignace, Ontario, and I have with me today Allyson Lyght, who is the chair of our school advisory council. Allyson and I left Ignace around noon, drove three hours through a different time zone so we could be here to talk to you about the problems we see that might happen to small high schools and small elementary schools in communities like ours. The fact that we're here today and that we drove that distance — we are going to turn around and drive back so we can be at work tomorrow — shows that we are concerned and interested in the education of our students and what will happen to our schools and our community, so I ask that you listen to what we have to say today.

I appear before you today to present a case for the small schools of northwestern Ontario.

In discussions I've had with other principals here in the north, we all agree that the viability of our schools is being threatened. Ignace School has worked hard to offer programs that provide opportunities for students when they leave our community for post-secondary education or seek employment in larger centres. I am concerned that the changes you threaten will result in a "stripped-down" model of education for our students.

Allyson and I would like to comment on several areas that make Ignace School unique: size, distance and isolation.

tion. In addition, we will comment on the new mega-board of which we will be a part. We recognize that the government wants to cut education costs. We agree that any cuts should come from administration rather than the classroom. However, we do not like your solution to cutting costs. We have a suggestion of our own that would give you your savings and solve the distance problems you have created for us.

Ms Allyson Lyght: Ignace School is a JK-to-OAC school, one of only three in the province of Ontario. It has a population of 200 elementary students and 200 secondary students. We are unique in other ways as well. Our secondary school offers an education to many non-resident pupils from Upsala, Savant Lake, Saugeen Reserve and other reserves north of Sioux Lookout. Some students board in the community; others travel an hour and a half to a different time zone. The school is fully inclusive, offering education to students with special needs directly in the classroom.

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Mrs Hall: While watching these hearings from Toronto, I listened as group after group, parent after parent demanded that services not be lost to their children. They mentioned art, music, dance, heritage language, multicultural programs, full-time trustees and even a high school for gay students. I could only drool as the opportunities offered in Toronto were mentioned. Our students have no such opportunities. We can only offer a limited academic program — English, math, science and some geography and history. We supplement our OAC program with that offered by distance education. We are not able to offer art, drama, dance or music programs. Any fewer teachers on our staff will further dilute our offerings.

In addition, there are no opportunities nearby to give our students access to such programs. Bringing the students to Thunder Bay is too costly for our school budget. We attempt to bring drama and music presentations to the school, but the costs for these productions take a healthy chunk from the school budget.

When the Ministry of Education announced special grants to keep class sizes below 20 students at the primary level, we were excited that the ministry recognized the importance of primary education. We were not to know that this long-awaited grant would push class sizes in the junior division to 35 to 40 students. In September 1996, we received many complaints from the parents of students in grades 3, 4 and 5 who were concerned that their children were in classes of 36 or 38. There was nothing we could do about the situation.

Ms Lyght: The secondary section of Ignace School is presently the recipient of a small school grant from the Ministry of Education. It is this grant that provides us with extra teaching staff to offer the small program we have now. It is this grant that assists with the travel costs when our teams participate in NorWAASA. It is this grant that helps bring in drama productions. It is this grant that allows students to visit the college and university in Thunder Bay once in their school career. It is this grant that allows us to offer a small outdoor education program, one that is so vital for our part of the province.

We are deeply concerned that this special assistance will disappear.

We are pleased that the government states that it will protect funding to the classroom. However, we are concerned about their definition of "classroom." Do you really believe that guidance, special education, caretaking and secretarial services are not part of the classroom, not to mention principals, vice-principals and department heads? These services are as essential to student learning as the classroom teacher.

Mrs Hall: Our guidance counsellors have two roles: education counselling and personal counselling. Very few counselling services are available in our community, and when they're available is not when the student is experiencing a crisis. Last week I overheard a conversation between the caretaker and a grade 6 student. The student was very distraught because he had noticed comments on the bathroom stall that suggested he was in love with a certain girl. He went to find the caretaker, showed him the graffiti and the caretaker spoke to him sympathetically, assuring him he would remove it immediately. You can rest assured the boy felt more comfortable when he went back to class. I could continue giving you examples of how these support staff help our students, but I don't have enough time for that.

Our small school has already been the victim of deep budgetary cuts. Last year our school budget was reduced by 15% and the support staff — library technicians, secretaries, caretakers and lunch-hour supervisors — was either reduced or eliminated. We can't handle any more cuts.

Presently, Ignace School is one of several schools in the Dryden Board of Education. In January 1998, we are to be part of a mega-board that will cover the whole area of Ontario west of Thunder Bay — some have said an area as large as France. Every meeting or workshop of principals or teachers requires us now to travel 115 kilometres each way to get to Dryden. We take our lives in our hands every time we travel in the winter. The roads are in terrible condition, the weather is unpredictable, the snowplows don't keep the roads clear and when we least expect it, we can find a moose or a bear in our path. Now you want to make our board area wider and put more people on these roads to travel longer distances.

As part of this mega-board, five communities and the unorganized territories come together to provide education to a very disparate group. Each community has its own unique needs. Each community will want to protect programs they've developed over the years. Atikokan is in a different time zone; Sioux Lookout has a large native population; Ignace and Rainy River are the smallest communities. How will one group of trustees meet the needs of these communities? Will Ignace even have a trustee? Maybe not.

A board of education of this size is simply ridiculous. Who will want to be a trustee, especially if the meetings are held in Kenora or, worse still, in Red Lake? You couldn't even drive to a meeting after work.

The saddest part of this is that the government could have done things differently. They could have halved the number of school boards, as they wanted, and kept the school boundaries as they were, or close to it. They could

have amalgamated the public and the separate boards. But no, they made a political decision, one to save their jobs. They hid behind the Constitution to save their jobs. The public and separate boards could have amalgamated and still offered Catholic education in some schools. The boards could have had both separate and public trustees.

This leads me to question whether the government has given any thought to the changes to education that they wish to make. Where is the strategic plan? My experience with planning leads me to believe that an overall strategic plan needs to be put in place before the action plans are formulated. This government is doing things backwards, putting the action plans before the strategic plan.

I am asking that when you return to Toronto and begin deliberations on our future, you listen to the comments that have been presented to you. We ask that you remember Ignace School when you make your decision. We remind you that things that work in large schools often do not work in small schools; isolated schools and single-school communities have different and additional costs when providing an education to their pupils; distance from other schools and communities is very expensive; and equality and equity are separate issues. Treating all students equally will not ensure equity.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Hall and Ms Lyght, for your presentation, for putting so passionately the problems of your school. You've used up all your time, but we thank you very much for coming.

SCHOOL COUNCIL CHAIRS, LAKEHEAD DISTRICT ROMAN CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD

The Chair: The school councils of the Lakehead District Roman Catholic Separate School Board. Good afternoon.

Mrs Joan Powell: Good afternoon. My name is Joan Powell. With me here today are Anita Shearer and Christine McAneely. We three are parents and among us we have seven children. We are also school council chairs with the Lakehead District Roman Catholic Separate School Board.

We believe it's important to let you know that none of us has been involved in a political process such as this before. We think it's a very positive thing that parents are becoming more involved in their children's education, although spending our March break away from our children in order to prepare for a government hearing was not what we had in mind when we joined school councils. We're here today because we feel compelled to be here. We are upset and worried about what has been happening to our education system lately, and we are very fearful about the changes that are now being forced upon us at an alarming rate.

During the past four years, the operating budget of our school board was cut by close to 20%. That means that approximately \$4.7 million was to be taken out of an already lean organization. In our view, our board and administration did a commendable job, for as long as they were able, of making cuts as far from classrooms as possible. Eventually, though, as the cuts continued to rain down upon us with unprecedented and unmitigated force,

they began to have a direct and disturbing impact on students. In our neighbourhood schools, we have seen essential personnel removed, programs lost, services cut, class sizes increased, and in spite of Mr Snobelen's promise to the contrary, our children in their classrooms have suffered the effects.

Cuts to our children's education have made us react with fear, anger and a threatening undercurrent of unease about the future. Many parents have not been prepared to sit idly by as their children struggle in larger classes with fewer resources. Those of us who are able to afford it have begun to look beyond the neighbourhood school for help, so we have seen the foundation of a two-tiered system of education being laid in Thunder Bay. Over the past few years, we have witnessed a huge growth in tutorial services in our city, services that offer supplemental instruction in the basics of reading, writing and mathematics, as well as those that offer enrichment in a variety of school subjects. The waiting lists are enormous for the services of private practitioners who offer educational services to school children.

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Alongside these pricey private services, there has been a groundswell of interest in the creation of private schools in Thunder Bay. It was not until these recent cuts and their painful effects that we heard any real interest in establishing private schools here, but parents are worried about their children's futures and they are increasingly losing faith in Ontario's schools. Clearly, the creation of a parallel system of private schools in cities like ours would have disastrous effects on public education in this province. We are here today to say that we are worried about the creeping reality of a two-tiered system.

We support Mr Snobelen's plan to ensure that "there will be no second-class students" in this province. However, it is our perception that there already are and the only way to contain the trend is to move towards eliminating the gap between those who are having their needs met in our publicly funded education system and those who are not.

Mr Snobelen now proposes to put money back in the classroom. We parents believe that money must be put back in the classroom, but two things concern us: How will the government define "classroom" in their funding model and where is the money going to come from?

When looking to focus resources on the classroom, we urge Mr Snobelen to employ a definition of "classroom" that recognizes the importance of librarians, guidance counsellors and special education personnel, as well as a myriad of other resources and professionals who, along with competent teachers and principals, provide the basic foundation and support upon which well-managed, focused and successful classrooms are built.

Concerning money, we have heard of Mr Snobelen's plan to take another billion dollars out of education. We parents are astounded at that assertion. If the proposed amalgamation of school boards will free up only \$150 million, where will the rest come from? We realize that there may still exist excesses in boards other than ours, but a billion dollars worth of excess seems unbelievable. If Mr Snobelen is wrong in his assumption that he will find this money through a reduction of unwanted fat in

education, where will he carve it from? We parents are very alarmed and frightened at the prospect of this money being squeezed from our schools. It is without question that any further cuts to the operating budgets of our schools will have a devastating effect on our children.

We support the government's proposed commitment to repair the current inequitable and unfair funding model "to ensure a high quality of education that meets all students' individual needs, regardless of where they live." We want assurance, however, that this new funding model will set a provincial per pupil amount that is based on an intelligent and informed notion of what comprises a good classroom, with provisions to adjust that amount up for our children to account for the higher costs of living in the north. We also want assurance that the new funding model will allow flexibility for discretionary spending by Catholic boards in order to maintain and nurture the specific and distinctive education that is offered in our Catholic schools.

As parents, we are very worried about the future of our separate school system. We worry about how our Catholic schools will remain distinct and apart from public schools now that our right to designate our taxes towards a separate school system has been suspended. Let us impress upon you today that we cherish the distinct nature of our separate school system and all that our Catholic schools provide for our children. We value our Catholic teachers and principals and we value our integrated Catholic curriculum that allows our children to strive to become not just the best students they can be but the best human beings they can be.

As parents, we are very concerned about the notion of outsourcing in our schools. We don't want to lose our secretaries or custodians or other non-teaching staff to a rotating band of strangers. We parents understand the role that these staff people play within our school community, a role that goes far beyond any job description. In the coming years, we want to continue to be greeted by the familiar faces who know our children by name, who participate as full members of our Catholic community and who can be trusted to treat our children with care and respect.

The issue of amalgamation here in the northern part of Ontario is a very worrisome one for parents. We worry that the plan for amalgamation in our region is not a sound one in terms of cost effectiveness, which is apparently the government's main concern, or benefits for our children, which is our main concern. We worry how we will attract intelligent, competent, caring people to run for trustees for our amalgamated board, given the new mandate and the physical demands of our huge region. We worry that the meagre resources that do remain in our school board today will have to be spread thinly throughout our new district school board tomorrow. We worry about our expanding role as school council members, as responsibilities are taken away from trustees.

Speaking as school council members now, we want to emphasize to you that in the interest of improving our children's education we're not afraid of the hard work, the long hours and the measly pay — that is to say, no pay — that goes along with the job. You should be aware, however, that many of our most dedicated, bright,

committed parents do not plan to return to the school council next year. For the past eight months, working hard to fulfil our mandate on school councils has left many of us feeling discouraged and disheartened. There are two main reasons for this: First, we have not been supported in our new role and we have received far from sufficient training to function effectively. The second reason is that people are very frightened by what they see as an ill-defined yet rapidly expanding role for school council members. In other words, many of us don't feel prepared, supported or equipped for the role as it stands now and we are not willing to take on more unless there's some effort on the part of the ministry to ensure that at least the most basic types of training and support systems will be provided.

Another area of great concern to school council members is the rush towards amalgamation of school boards. The breakneck speed with which school boards are to be dismantled, refocused and reformed causes many of us to react with alarm. What mistakes will be made during the race for change? We wonder about the government's ultimate goal for school boards as we consider the concurrent impact of taking responsibilities away from trustees while moving to strengthen the role of school councils and increase parental involvement in education governance. Quite frankly, we're worried that the government plans to take us the way of New Brunswick and eventually do away with school boards altogether.

Please allow us to make this crystal clear today: Members of our Catholic school councils do not want to take on the responsibility of trustees. We value our trustees. We believe deeply in the importance of a strong, dedicated board of trustees working as guardians of our Catholic system as a whole while advocating on behalf of our special needs students, our first nations population and other groups and programs that require the clear and united vision of a governing body. We on school councils plan to develop a strong partnership with the trustees of our new DSB to provide them with insights and information about our individual schools and to work co-operatively with them while respecting the very different mandates we have each opted to fulfil. But please allow me to repeat: We do not want their jobs.

A final point we wish to make has to do with the Ontario Parent Council. As you must be aware, the OPC is made up of 18 politically appointed individuals who operate with a reported budget of \$600,000. First of all, we think a budget that size would be much better put to use in the classrooms of our children. Secondly, we do not want our messages about how our school councils are functioning or not functioning filtered through the tinted lenses of non-elected individuals who may support a political agenda. If school councils are in fact an integral part of the plan to reform education in this province and if our responsibilities are going to increase over the coming years, then we want and need a direct link to the Minister of Education and Training. Given our level of commitment and dedication to the pursuit of quality education, we hold that school councils deserve a voice at the provincial level.

Before I close, I feel compelled to comment on the manner in which this government has chosen to undertake

education reform. Throughout this presentation, I have stated again and again that parents like the three of us here are worried, fearful and angry. It is our opinion that the Conservative government of Ontario has been shamefully irresponsible in its recent announcements of change. They seem to us arrogant and dogged in their delivery of grand schemes, devoid of all detail. They rush us towards amalgamation without bothering to examine or explain how amalgamation here in the north will benefit any of us. They tell us that resources will go to the classrooms, but they fail to provide us with the critical funding formula. They urge the changes forward with a vigour that allows for minimal public input and debate and they choose not to participate in public sessions on reform hosted here in our city.

Finally, to implement their reforms, they set up an all-powerful commission that cannot be challenged or made to respond to the concerns of the people.

I started out today saying that none of us had been involved in a political process such as this before. We are involved now, and we parents are examining the proposed education reforms with great interest and a greater willingness to participate than many of us have experienced before. The increased participation of parents is to be celebrated. It is also to be taken as fair warning. We parents will be watching very carefully as this government implements change that will affect our children's futures, and we will be watching very closely to see how our concerns of today are addressed in the details of reform tomorrow.

The Chair: Mrs Powell, I thank you and your colleagues for being here today, for your participation at these hearings and for putting your viewpoints forth so eloquently.

1730

PORTER BAILEY

The Chair: Could I call upon Porter Bailey. Welcome, Mr Bailey, and thank you for coming.

Mr Porter Bailey: Good evening, committee members. First I'd like to present a little bit of personal data and background on myself. My name is Porter Bailey. I grew up in Thunder Bay and attended Heath Park Public School and Westgate High School, both of which are not too far from here in the Westfort area.

I am currently working in the computer and information-processing field, where I find there is a virtually unlimited amount of work with constant demands to take on new projects and to become involved in new skills. As one would expect, there is a limited amount of time and personal availability to handle what there is to do. There is considerable pressure for growth in this field in the Thunder Bay area.

In regard to the education environment, I wish to talk at first about a particular learning environment that several of you will be familiar with. One of the most notable aspects of the career area in which I find myself is the fact that one is part of a total, all-encompassing, ongoing learning process that does not stop or slow down. New facets and features, new hardware and software, new processes by which things are done are the

norm, and these things must be absorbed at the fastest possible rate. I often feel nearly engulfed and overtaken by the new skills required and the new concepts that must be thought through on an ongoing basis. Consequently, in the past few years I have been involved in a continuous learning process.

Having said that, it is worth noting that there is a huge educational industry out there involved in the process of assisting adults with the adoption of new skills and the maintenance and upgrading of existing levels of current skills. To describe briefly how this process takes place, I would note that several facets include the following: Various organizations conduct in-house seminars. External seminars are a fact of life involving many employees.

On any given day, I usually receive one or more brochures on skill-enhancing educational seminars, on product-specific meetings and on industry trade shows. As many people are aware, colleges and universities are continually offering adult upgrading courses, including everything from learning basic computer skills to earning an MBA. The Internet is used as a forum of learning and as a source of reference by large numbers of people. The level of this form of learning activity is tremendous and it has obviously found a very strong market.

The point is that here is a major industry very much in demand, running along by itself, adapting to the needs of its constituents in a very fluid and dynamic manner on a North American or worldwide basis, and yet being in a constant state of change. I mention this briefly at the outset as a particular model with which many people are familiar and from which some points may be drawn later in this presentation.

Bill 104, the proposed legislation: The legislation under review by this committee proposes a number of changes to Ontario's education system, among them the reduction of the number of school boards from 129 to 66. The general thrust of the change is to effect cost reductions related to the running of the system. To evaluate changes in a system, it is often useful to think about where we are going. By developing some focus on the end point we are better able to decide a reasonable path to follow in getting there.

Evaluate current economic model of elementary education: First of all, what is the economic basis for the classroom system? This model, which sees one teacher teaching some 25 to 30 students, is an effective means of providing the lowest cost per pupil by defraying the fixed teaching expense over many students. Similarly, given the fixed costs of the physical plant, ie, classrooms, school yards etc, the cost of the facilities to each student is minimized.

The current economic model for our education is an ancient one and, generally speaking, practically a universal one. It is widely used, principally because it is the best and most economic model devised. On occasion it is carried to extremes. Many people in this room will recall university seminars in which a particular professor spoke in a hall with up to 200 or 300 students present. We all remember some of those courses, and from the university's point of view, they must have liked this model quite a bit. In any event, the model and the general economics of it are likely totally familiar to everyone here.

However, the world is changing. The path of change now involves a lot of new and developing technology. Most teachers and parents will agree that students love to play on or use the Internet. In fact the Internet is becoming a tremendous source of information and learning, to the point that in preparing for this presentation I spent some time on the Internet learning about some of the matters that are being heard before this committee.

Suppose in the near future that, for instance, the University of Tennessee decided to develop a grade 10 English literature course and post it on the Internet. First of all, from an economic point of view, it costs no more if a single individual uses the course or if thousands of people around the world decide to do so. The costs go in up front and the costs going forward are minuscule.

Now consider the student point of view. Students like using the Internet and they like the multimedia that computers offer. Students have a general dislike for getting up early and getting to class. This course would be available 24 hours a day, seven days per week, and as many or as few as wanted to could do the course at any one point in time.

It is possible to develop online interaction between students and between teachers and students. It is quite possible to have links available to allow for additional research and inquiry. Each student would be able to proceed at his own pace and manage his own curriculum. The course could easily be made available in the remotest areas. In summary, programs in numerous disciplines are similar worldwide, thereby allowing for a huge market and constant competition to provide a better quality of course product.

Given that this is the sort of thing that is presently developing in the wings in our educational world, the question now is, is it so important that we maintain the existing version of our educational system? There is a proposal before us to make some changes in the interest of saving money. Given the much more major dramatic changes that are moving into view, I believe the proposed changes are not particularly monumental. Let's go ahead and save the money while we can and then refocus more of our attention on other developments that are possible and will happen in the broader field of education.

As noted, there is a major change proceeding now, independent of this province, that will affect all the information gathering and handling industries. These industries include such areas as education, finance, accounting, insurance, law and the area of politics. In a broad context, my position is also that the whole system of province, board and schools is now approaching a time when the existing model will have to be moved off centre stage in the interests of a new evolutionary model in which diversity and flexibility are the key criteria.

One of the questions under consideration today is, should there be 129 boards or should there be 66 boards? I support a move to 66 boards, but I am of the view that a different number, perhaps zero or 16 or 76, may be the necessary answer in the not very distant future. For now, there is a chance to reduce the ongoing costs and we should proceed to do so.

I therefore conclude that I support the changes proposed on the basis that these changes alone will not really

be a major change, given the above context, and will likely save some dollars overall. Bill 104 is about funding, and if we can save money, we will all benefit.

I would like to make a few final points. I question that there should be representatives to this committee from individuals and groups involving those currently employed by the school boards that are under consideration. I believe they would be in a straight conflict of interest and cannot properly represent the views of society as a whole. If heard from, these views must be accepted in that light.

1740

On a second point unrelated to the above, I firmly believe society should allow and protect the freedoms of individuals, particularly the freedom of the right to work. The Legislature in the past has set up laws that guarantee teachers must be part of a closed-shop employment organization. I do not believe that this is in the best interests of society, more so in light of the changes that I believe are moving towards the educational system at the present time. Therefore, it would appear to me that the Legislature should consider changing this area.

Finally, I would like to commend the government for having the courage to begin the process of re-evaluating the basis of our educational system. I would also like to thank all the MPPs on the committee for taking the time to come to Thunder Bay and for hearing the various depositions on this matter and for giving citizens a chance to be heard.

The Chair: Mr Bailey, on behalf of the committee I want to thank you for taking the time to come here and present your views as an individual.

SUSANNE MARQUARDT

The Chair: I would now call Susanne Marquardt. Thank you for coming and welcome to the committee.

Ms Susanne Marquardt: A bit of background information on myself: I grew up in Rainy River, a town of 1,200 people on the American border 100 kilometres west of Fort Frances. I attended Lakehead University, graduating in 1976 with an honours bachelor of arts and a bachelor of education. I have taught for over 15 years in Nova Scotia, Quebec and Ontario at university, CEGEP and elementary levels. My specialties are French immersion, special education and English as a second language. During the past four years I have written a weekly column on education for the Thunder Bay Post.

I come before this committee today with many questions and concerns regarding Bill 104. I begin with a question regarding the government's explanation for the Fewer School Boards Act, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards. I have examined this act very closely, line by line, and I am left with the question, how will reducing the number of school boards accomplish greater accountability, effectiveness and quality of education in northwestern Ontario?

For me the statement is an obvious oxymoron. How does one pay less to get more? How do we reduce to improve? Will Bill 104 give us smaller classes? Will it

make a difference to the French immersion teacher in his second year of teaching who has a morning grade 7/8 split of 40 students and an afternoon class of a 5/6 split? How about the high school students who ride a bus for two hours in the morning to get to school? Will Bill 104 build them their own rural high school? Quality implies attention to detail, the finest of materials, the best craftsmanship and a high price tag. This act does nothing to apply these aspects of quality to our education system.

Bigger is best rules the day here. Instead of narrowing communication gaps, we are expanding them. Instead of uniting administrators and educators, we are increasing the distances physically and emotionally. Children are already being corralled into larger schools with overcrowded classrooms. Schools have already lost their prominence as centres for community solidarity. We have already taken the schools out of our communities. Now we are threatening to take the community out of our schools.

By amalgamating school boards we are losing too many individual voices. We are encouraging apathy by overloading trustees and paying them a pittance for 10 times the effort. How about the parent who needs to talk to a board member living 500 kilometres from their school? Why bother? By the time he's provided basic information, he won't have the energy to discuss the problem. Communication between parents and administrators is already lacking. Parents are resorting to lawsuits to make their voices heard.

Instead of creating even larger distances between education members, money could be better spent in setting up a liaison office where an impartial ombuds-person would listen to concerns and mediate a solution that is viable for both parties.

There is one group that stands to benefit from this act by improving the quality of their education system. I refer to the separate school boards. The support of Bill 104 by the Catholic trustees association is based on a handshake promise of equity funding. But as Marilies Rettig, president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, points out, the terms of the funding promise have not been disclosed and equity could be achieved by less drastic means. However, separate school board members unanimously recognize the obvious: They will be able to offer a higher quality of education with more money. That's how quality works: You invest money now and your investment pays off later.

In the matter of accountability, I can see how strengthening the role of school councils over time pays lip-service to greater accountability. However, even this token effort is fraught with suspicious error. First, the expression of strengthening is very vague. Does this imply that parents will be involved in the hiring and firing of teachers, a practice which could be potentially prejudicial? Will parents be paid for their greater involvement? How many parents are willing to take on greater responsibilities?

There are already indications that certain special interest groups such as fundamentalist religions are moving in to dominate school councils. There is also a noticeable absence of fathers on school councils.

A stronger case for accountability comes in our expectations as a society of our government and of its duty to make education a number one priority on its political agenda. Our citizens are accountable for public education through our present taxation system set up by Egerton Ryerson in 1846 to "compel selfish rich men to do what they ought to do" in terms of universal education.

Our teachers are also extremely accountable for their instructional expertise. They continually update on ministry guidelines. They issue regular reports, employ an immense variety of testing tools, and are constantly under the scrutiny of parents, administrators, students and, over the last couple of years, the government of Ontario.

In a difficult economic time when job security is relatively non-existent, many people look with envy on teachers with their summer vacations, good pay and job tenure. This government over the last year and a half has fanned the flames of envy with open jabs at teachers' integrity. It is not surprising that the government will find much sympathy in the private sector for seizing 100% control of education financing: "Now those blankety blank teachers will have to negotiate new contracts with Toronto. We'll see how they like losing their 'privileged status' of job security."

The gift of the provincial government in appropriating local education costs will soon show its true Trojan Horse identity. As welfare costs, housing and police expenses come spilling forth, the benevolence of the government will show its true intentions. This gift is no gift at all. As municipalities become overburdened with these new social service costs, they will be tempted to privatize public services. We have already seen the disastrous consequences in wages and benefits to workers, job layoffs and the lowering of standards of service in other situations where privatization has occurred.

I am also alarmed by a certain vagueness in Bill 104 concerning the appointment of the Education Improvement Commission. Much is left to the pleasure of the Lieutenant Governor and to the Minister of Education and, it would appear, to the pleasure of the commission itself.

1750

The Chair: Ms Marquardt, can I ask you to wrap up, please?

Ms Marquardt: All right. The status of the commission is very totalitarian. I'll just skip ahead here. Who will be chosen for this crucial role, or are we simply replacing 150 years of democracy with the Gang of Five?

I am searching for evidence that this bill is not just another step down the road to privatizing public responsibilities. I am trying very hard to believe that it will not open the door to corporate sponsorship of schools. Yet all the evidence points to a retrogressive step back to the time when Egerton Ryerson first began his battle for a strong system of public education. This bill does not enhance the effectiveness or the accountability of education. It most certainly does not improve the quality of Ontario's education system. *Au contraire.*

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Marquardt. On behalf of the committee I regret there is not enough time for the full text, but I assure you that the full text will form part of the official record.

ONTARIO ENGLISH CATHOLIC
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION, KENORA UNIT,
THUNDER BAY ELEMENTARY AND
SECONDARY UNITS

The Chair: The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, Kenora unit, Thunder Bay elementary and secondary units. Welcome. You have 15 minutes to make your presentation.

Ms Eleanor Pentick: I'm Eleanor Pentick. I am president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association of Thunder Bay, the elementary unit. With me are Don Cattani, the president in Thunder Bay of the secondary unit, and Rosemary Robertson of the Kenora unit.

Before we begin I'd like to first of all thank you very much for providing us with this opportunity, and I would like it clearly indicated in the record that we do not in any way apologize for being a special interest group. We are indeed a special interest group. We have a specific special interest, that is, the education of our children in Ontario.

We do know that the English Catholic Teachers' Association provincially has already presented a brief to you and of course it is not our intention today to highlight what they spoke to you about, particularly the issue surrounding constitutional rights. However, we do stress that we fully agree with the positions taken by our provincial association and the ones stated to you in that presentation.

Our intent today is to highlight but a few of the other issues which are of particular concern to the teachers in Thunder Bay. Mr Cattani and Ms Robertson will be addressing those issues shortly, but first I would like to make a few general comments regarding the Education Improvement Commission.

The powers being placed in the hands of this Education Improvement Commission, the EIC, are very disturbing to us. As you know, they will have sweeping powers to supervise and monitor the actions and control the financial expenditures of our present board and for the new district school boards until the year 2001.

Since the decisions of that commission are binding and cannot be reviewed or questioned by a court, in essence our boards will be placed into receivership without any real autonomy or authority. We find that particularly disturbing because we are extremely proud of our board and what they have accomplished over the years. They have shown a remarkable ability to run a very excellent system with inadequate funding and they have done that responsibly.

We believe that the seizure of our board's powers is not only undemocratic but will prove to be costly as well. This government is constantly speaking of the need for school boards to be more cost-efficient, and yet, to our knowledge, no estimates of the transitional costs related to amalgamation, including the costs of the EIC, have been released. We cannot help but wonder why.

We also note that the EIC is empowered to make recommendations on the outsourcing of non-instructional services. Although the minister has again publicly stated that the restructuring will not affect the classrooms, we're concerned that his definition does not appear to include

principals, vice-principals, teacher-librarians, guidance counsellors, support staff, secretaries, heat, lights and maintenance.

We would remind this government through you that schools are not factories; they are communities, and each employee in that community does have an effect on the classroom and the students therein. We believe that the use of non-qualified and/or migrant workers in our schools will negatively impact on our school communities and will in no way improve education in Ontario.

OECTA is also concerned that Bill 104 does not guarantee that the new district boards will assume the collective bargaining and collective agreement obligations held by the existing boards, nor does the bill ensure that teachers will not be transferred between municipalities. The latter is of great import to the teachers in north-western Ontario where the proposed district school boards encompass vast geographical areas, as you've heard. Unless fair labour practices and successor rights are guaranteed, one can only expect labour disputes which will in the end be very costly.

Ms Rosemary Robertson: No apologies this afternoon for the repetitiveness of what you're going to hear in terms of amalgamation issues and our concerns about them. Specifically, I'm going to touch on a few of them.

Representation on school boards: We are very concerned about the limitations on eligibility to hold the position of trustee and the fact that a large geographic area — in our case, 10,000 square kilometres — may be prohibitive for some people in considering running for trustee.

The question might be raised, will there be equal representation from all the communities with a limited number of resources and how can that be possible? Fewer trustees over a larger area will make them less accessible to the public and to the parents and it will be nigh unto impossible to assess them in terms of accountability. I believe that's one of the government's aims in this whole exercise.

Our recommendation is that amalgamation would be postponed pending appropriate public consultation on the electoral boundaries, and also that employees of existing or district school boards and their spouses, as well as municipal employees, be eligible to run for district school boards without taking unpaid leaves of absence from their jobs.

In terms of board meetings, it's going to be very difficult to conduct day-to-day business. Communication technology is a solution, but it's not a reality in the north. Circumstances arise which necessitate a physical presence at a meeting, and time and costs in travel are going to eradicate the savings that are supposed to be made by Bill 104.

Communication: Access to information from boards and the ability to input to boards will be difficult due to the distance and the lack of technology again, and the groups to suffer will be the parents and the children and the board staff.

In reference to school councils, governance is going to change at the local level due to the EIC having the power to recommend strengthening the role of school councils. Under current legislation, school councils are functioning

in the north and strongly, although finding people willing to serve has not been easy and will not be any easier in the future, considering a heavier mandate that may be required of them. Therefore, we would recommend that the powers afforded to school councils remain advisory in nature.

Mr Don Cattani: I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the MPPs to our beautiful city, with the sun shining today, and invite you back at any time for maybe a pleasanter encounter, if we talked about something like recreation or fishing.

In particular, welcome to Conservative MPPs. I'll be 50 before your term's over and I've only seen two in Thunder Bay in my life, so it's nice to see a few of you around.

Mr Beaubien: I was here fishing and hunting in the fall. Maybe I should take you around and show you a few spots.

Mr Cattani: Excellent. I'd appreciate that, monsieur.

Mr Beaubien: Just because we are from the south, it doesn't mean that we don't travel to the north.

Mr Cattani: I can continue now? Thank you.

There's the possibility that present in all of us is the conviction that we are far more interesting in what we have to say than in the questions you may have to ask us, so I'm going to try to be very brief in the hope that I can get a few questions out of you — hunting or fishing or whatever.

I'm not here just as a teacher. I'm a parent of five children and I'm a ratepayer, a taxpayer and a federation president as well, so I have a lot of particular interest caps on. I'm also very interested in saving money, so rather than bask you on this Bill 104, which, by the way, I wish you wouldn't put through to third reading, I'd like to talk to you about saving money. Really, saving money seems to be what our minister is all about.

1800

I'm reminded of Robert Frost on distance. I'm sure you're all familiar with his lines: "The woods are lovely, dark and deep/But I have promises to keep/And miles to go before I sleep." I think most of our trustees and board workers in this new board, which I've heard described as the size of Spain, France, two Irelands or whatever, will be thinking of that in the late nights and early mornings as they travel through northwestern Ontario.

Many people have talked to you about the transportation infrastructure, the inadequacy. It's just not southern Ontario. We have two towns in our entire new board that have rail service. The only deal is that you have to drive to Winnipeg first to board the train. It's really not an issue. There is not same-day bus service to all of the communities. Later on in our presentation, I believe on page 12, is an entire breakdown of transportation.

You've heard people talk about communication: the cellular technology, the e-mail, the Internet and things like that. I'll leave that for you to read.

In conclusion, what we're saying is that we think it's going to be costly. Our board appeared earlier today and said: "Sure, go ahead with the amalgamation, but we need four years of transition and funding for that transition." Let's speak businessperson to businessperson to Mr Snobelen: We don't think this is going to save any

money, unless of course it's going to save money from some children vis-à-vis other children.

If you'll note the last page of our presentation, the per pupil expenditure in Geraldton and in Longlac and in Nakina and in Terrace Bay and Schreiber and Manitouwadge and Marathon is higher than it is in Thunder Bay. That's not a surprise if you've been to any of these communities, as I'm sure Monsieur Beaubien has. It's not a surprise at all; it's very costly to live in those communities. If we're going to get a fixed amount and if equality and justice are the rule of the day, either Thunder Bay's per capita has to go down to maintain Geraldton's or Geraldton's programs have to be lessened to equalize Thunder Bay's. Which is it? Or are there going to be transitional funds?

We would say to you that it's not a sign of weakness — in fact we really appreciate the chance to consult with you. It's a wonderful thing. It's not a sign of weakness to go back to the people and say: "Yes, we went from 129 to 66. Maybe we need 71 boards. Maybe that's all right." It's not a sign of weakness to take a look and say, "We could save a lot of dollars," but in northwestern Ontario, in particular in the Kenora and Thunder Bay regions, those boards are unwieldy and may end up costing more than you're going to save.

Thank you very much for this opportunity, and we'd be pleased to have any questions from you.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you for your presentation. I'll just ask a quick question that was asked earlier by one of the presenters. Do you think OECTA has benefited from full funding way back in — what was it? — 1982 or whenever it came into place: full funding of separate schools.

Mr Cattani: It's not really full funding, as you know, because —

Mr O'Toole: Yes. I was a separate school trustee at the time, so I'm fairly familiar with it.

Mr Cattani: When we get our share of Eaton's taxation — maybe that's a bad example; of Sear's taxation — then we'll consider that we have full funding. As you know, with our commercial-based assessment, we don't have a formula for pooling —

Mr O'Toole: That's more the grant ceiling. Do you think you've gained —

The Chair: Mr O'Toole, will you let him finish, please.

Mr Cattani: To have completion and to have the Catholic education system up to OAC has been a wonderful thing, so obviously the answer is yes, Mr O'Toole, but I think we could talk for a long time on the funding issue.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much, first of all, for agreeing to present jointly so that we could hear the views of OECTA and your concerns. Thank you, maybe particularly, for giving us that last page that shows the costs in areas like North of Superior and Geraldton, as opposed to the Lakehead, because I think that helps to destroy the myth that there is this great abundance of wealth somewhere else that can then be pulled back and redistributed to create the equity.

One of the reports that was done for the minister said very clearly that amalgamating boards could lead to an increase in costs rather than a reduction in costs. It's one

of the statements that the ministry has chosen not to address, other than by saying to the consultants that they would solve that problem by taking over control of educational funding.

The consultants said the reason the costs would go up was because of the cost of harmonization of services and salaries. The ministry is going to avoid costs going up by taking control. They're going to have to either cut services or salaries. Any idea which it's going to be?

Mr Cattani: I don't think we're very optimistic. Pick your poison.

Mrs McLeod: It could be both.

Mr Cattani: It could be both, yes, a little bit of each.

Ms Lankin: To follow up on that point, the scuttlebutt around Queen's Park is that yesterday, for the policy and priorities committee of cabinet, the Ministry of Education presented a report for the recommendations on major changes in collective bargaining in the education system, based largely on the Paroian report. I haven't heard any rumours in terms of what P and P decided with respect to that because I had to come up here, but I think those major changes are forthcoming, particularly if the government wants to count on the numbers they've put forward, because nothing else actually seems to make sense; the numbers aren't really achievable.

We've heard from a number of presenters that the costs of education have skyrocketed over the last number of years. They talk about this 82% increase in costs of school boards. It seems to me that if you take the increased number of kids in the system, inflation, provincial programs that have been mandated down, the cost of extension of public funding to the separate school system, all of that, that 82% can actually probably be explained and it's not really a result of irresponsibility. I wonder, from your boards and your organization, if you had a perspective.

Ms Pentick: I believe one of the things the minister has been saying is that he is concerned that the local school boards have been raising their taxes on an annual basis. I guess what he failed to tell the people is that one of the reasons they were raising their taxes is because they were getting less money from the provincial government. Of course, as that funding from the provincial government was reduced they had to raise money locally.

I also would like to draw to your attention that, according to Stats Canada, the Ontario average per pupil expenditure in 1995 was \$6,961. The Canadian average was \$6,796. The difference between the Canadian average and the Ontario average is only \$165 per pupil, or approximately \$390 million, not the \$1 billion claimed by Mr Snobelen.

I think you also have to bear in mind that of course our costs are higher: Ontario is far more industrialized; it is more urban; most of the immigrant families for whom English is a second language come to Ontario; more of our students stay in school longer. I think that's very important.

Mr Cattani: I would like to add that Stats Canada also showed that when the NDP government took over, I think we were 35th of 60 jurisdictions, the American states and 10 Canadian provinces combined. We've slipped to 47th.

The Chair: Mr Cattani, Ms Pentick, Ms Robertson, we thank you very much for coming here and presenting jointly the positions of your respective organizations.

CRAIG NUTTALL

The Chair: I call upon Craig Nuttall. As Mr Nuttall makes his way, I noticed there are a number of people standing in the back. There are some seats in the front if you wish to be seated.

Welcome, Mr Nuttall. We're looking forward to your presentation.

Mr Craig Nuttall: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would first of all like to make it very clear in Hansard that I am the president of the Kenora PC Riding Association. I'm not here representing them tonight.

The Chair: You're welcome in any event.

Mr Nuttall: Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

I'd just like to perhaps tell you a little about my experience. I have been chamber of commerce president in Dryden, at which time we had over 200 members, in 1984, 1985 and 1995. I was a town councillor for the town of Dryden from 1980-82 and 1989-91. I served on the hospital board from 1979-82. I was also a coordinator for the Youth Trust of Ontario, which was an organization that helped youth get into the business world, which the Liberals cut; we no longer had funding so we had to dissolve it. I also won the Dryden High School teachers Excellence in Education award in 1983.

Actually, I'm here today as a past councillor and business representative to talk about Bill 104.

1810

I'd like to turn your attention to the first page here from the corporation of the town of Dryden just to explain to you the situation that we had when I was on council. From the years 1984 to 1989, town council did not increase taxes once, but in that same time period, from 1984 to 1989, education taxes were increased 33.11%. I can tell you right now — and this is from the town — that if the municipal tax bill in 1982 was \$100, your taxes would be \$144 right now from the municipality in 1997. Your education tax of \$100 in 1982 would be \$189.

I've also enclosed the three pages that I received from the Dryden Board of Education on their actual budget for 1995. It's salaries and wages for trustees, allowances, travel expenses, supplies and services, general administration, personnel training. If you turn to page 3, you'll see that our board, with the administration that they have and the trustees, the total value that they spend is \$596,396. That's for a board that we have in Dryden alone. If you figure out the other five boards, that they spend approximately the same amount, you would have over \$2 million to put back in the classroom. I think that everyone wants to see the money towards the education of our children.

I'd like to talk about the quality of education in the past years that I've been associated with the business community. For 13 years I owned a restaurant, and at the restaurant we used to have takeout delivery of food. We would hire students in grade 10 and grade 11, good students, and we appreciated that we could help the youth. One of the first questions they would ask me is: "When we go on deliveries, do we have to make

change?" "Yes, you do. You also have to have a float." "Well, Mr Nuttall, would you mind if I have a calculator?" I would say, "Why do you need a calculator?" "Because I can't figure out change." I would ask them: "What do you mean you can't figure out change? What do you do when you go into a department store?" The kids would tell me, "I'm very fortunate because it's on the till." Well, God help us if we ever have a power failure.

I think that there is no knowledge of current events being taught at the present time. There's no status of political parties. If you asked a kid in high school who the Prime Minister was, he'd probably tell you O.J. Simpson because he's seen it on TV. There is no proper education being taught to the children.

Let's talk about the teaching profession. Teachers right now are threatening, if you proceed with this Bill 104, they will go on strike. Isn't that great? Once again our youth of today will be suffering because of the selfishness of the teachers. I agree that principals and vice-principals should be the managers of the schools. There is no doubt in my mind that the principal knows better than anyone else what goes on in the schools, and they should not be in the federation. They should be independent and they should be able to be managers of the facility.

I would like to say that one of the things that everybody is forgetting: There is only one taxpayer. We pay the teachers' salaries, the taxpayers do, and we're not getting the service that we should get.

I think the evaluation of the students is very good. We have to continue that and make sure that our children are ready for tomorrow. I'm very disappointed Mr Hampton is not here because —

Ms Lankin: He was here today.

Mr Nuttall: I understand he was but you're here representing the party, and I'm glad to see you because I see you on TV all the time. I saw the day you got thrown out and I felt sorry for you.

Ms Lankin: I felt sorry for myself, too.

Mr Nuttall: I have a chance to watch what I call the comedy hour, the question period, and really, when David Cooke resigned his seat, everybody got up, the Liberals, the NDP and the Conservatives, and said what a great man he was, one of the best men that you'd ever had. He was very conscientious about his values and education, a former education minister of the NDP. He resigns his seat to work on this education commission. I say to you, the NDP, please understand that David Cooke really knows what he's doing when he quits the NDP, and I take my hat off to David because I think —

Ms Lankin: He hasn't quit the party, sir.

Mr Nuttall: Well, he's still in the party but he's not in the House.

To wrap up, I'd say that the quality of education is what we're looking at, and whether there's few boards or not, I think it will work. I spent time on the hospital board. It was a local hospital board and I received no remuneration whatsoever. My remuneration is my reward that I did for the hospital board. We also had district health councils at that time; we still have, and they work out fine. We have no trouble with the district health

councils. They make recommendations and the boards go along with their recommendations. I see no problems here with the education. I think the number one priority that we have to understand is that the government is doing this to save money, to put it back into education. We have to educate the children of today because they're our leaders of tomorrow. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you, Mr Nuttall. We have approximately one minute per caucus.

Mr Miclash: Mr Nuttall, I was at the hearings which you attended in Dryden where you referred to MPPs as nothing but a bunch of ribbon cutters, and I remember it quite vividly after a good number of MPPs from all parties travelled to Dryden for those hearings. I'm just wondering, after hearing some of the board chairs and the trustees and the presentations that they've made here today, the work that they put into our system, do you consider them in the same category?

Mr Nuttall: No, I don't, Frank. First of all, they're doing a fairly good job in education. It's just the bureaucrats are too big. In your case, it was a personal remark I made of you and I still say that that's all you really do, is cut ribbons.

Mr Miclash: After hearing the uniqueness of the boards — we talk about the first nations school in Ear Falls operated by the Red Lake board, the student trustees as found on various boards throughout the region — do you think we're going to be better served by taking the power away from these local boards, as I mentioned, the students, the trustees, the parents, the chairpeople, and giving it to a larger party?

The Vice-Chair: I'm afraid time is up.

Mr Miclash: Just a yes or no.

The Vice-Chair: I'll ask Mr Nuttall to respond quickly, please.

Mr Nuttall: First of all, I don't think you're taking any power away from them because the transitional school in Ear Falls, for instance, Frank, which you know — if you were up there you would understand that the first nations do have a big impact in that school. We will still have the parent-teachers, similar to we have the health boards in schools. You know, Frank, if you would travel the area, you would understand that there are good things out there.

The Vice-Chair: Mr Nuttall, the time is up. The third party, Ms Lankin.

Ms Lankin: I'm actually quite pleased that I have a much more respectful relationship with the president of the local PC riding association in my riding than is apparent here.

Let me say to you, respectfully, the figures that you put forward in terms of while you were on local municipal council —

Interjection.

Mr Nuttall: Frank, I can't hear her question. Sorry.

Ms Lankin: The numbers that you've put forward with respect to — I really think that this is just partisan crap.

Mr Nuttall: Well, a little bit, yes.

Ms Lankin: Yes, I really do.

Mr Nuttall: I try to flatten his tires now and then, but I don't —

Ms Lankin: I don't think it's really in the interest of the hearing of the bill and to try and understand what expertise you bring to this.

You have given us some numbers from when you were on council — and I take this very seriously, the numbers you put forward — and you show that the education portion of the tax bill increased over that period of time. The concern I have with that, because I've seen some similar numbers being presented in areas of the Toronto board and the East York board etc, in the area of the province that I represent —

The Vice-Chair: Ms Lankin, your time is up.

Ms Lankin: I'll wrap up. Those numbers actually reflect increase in the numbers of students and mandated provincial programs that the boards had to pick up, so do you think that's actually a fair way to present these numbers? Isn't it blaming the wrong people to be —

Mr Nuttall: I really can't answer that question fully. You know why? Because when I was on council, we used to question the board of education's increases and why they had increases. We were told: "You people on municipal council, it's none of your business. You look after the municipality and we'll look after the education." 1820

The Vice-Chair: Time is up for Ms Lankin. To the government, Mr Froese.

Mr Froese: Just a comment with respect to Ms Lankin's comment. I think you do have the expertise. Your résumé shows that you do.

Ms Lankin: I was acknowledging that too. I was trying to get to that expertise.

Mr Froese: Okay, thanks.

Thank you for coming. I appreciate the comments you made about David Cooke. I think it behooves everybody to realize and understand that when we as a government have to do something — we said in the Common Sense Revolution, our party platform, that we would look at all aspects of government. How do we get those persons to bring forward those plans? We look at all people, and Dave Cooke is a prime example. It doesn't matter what political party they're involved in; we get the right person to do the job and do it right. So thanks for those comments.

The Vice-Chair: Time is up. Thank you, sir, for coming down today.

GEORGE SAARINEN

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation, and I apologize if I'm not pronouncing this right, is George Saarinen. Mr Saarinen, you have 10 minutes for your presentation and any time you leave over for questions and answers.

Mr George Saarinen: My name is George Saarinen, and I brought my daughter Sadie along today just to see what it's all about. After all, they're the leaders of tomorrow.

First off, I'm a parent of two children in the Lakehead board system. I'm the chair of the McKellar Park school. My comments are coming as a parent and as a volunteer. I'm not involved with the hierarchy of education. I don't know about capital grants and too much else. I know about school closures. I'll talk about that later.

First, I'd like to say welcome everyone to Thunder Bay. We are very happy you're here. It's just unfortunate you weren't able to go to the surrounding communities, because they would have really benefited from this.

It's unimaginable to me to have one school board to service an area of this size. Presently we have four school boards, with representation to all towns within their jurisdiction. At present the Lake Superior board, which is the Manitouwadge to Schreiber one, has 15 trustees, the Nipigon-Red Rock board has nine, the Geraldton board has 13 and the Lakehead board, Thunder Bay, has 13 trustees. With the new legislation, will we be looking at one trustee to represent the towns of Manitouwadge, Marathon, Terrace Bay, Schreiber and Rossport, one to represent the towns of Nipigon, Red Rock and Dorion, and one to represent the towns of Longlac, Geraldton, Jellicoe and Beardmore? Possibly three trustees to represent an area surrounding Thunder Bay.

I understand we will be allotted anywhere from five to 12 trustees for all of area 6. I don't know how that single trustee can visit all of these towns and discuss the concerns of the ratepayers concerned with school board related issues. The legislation is putting a tremendous strain on these trustees who are considering to represent these vast areas.

I was born and raised in the small community of Geraldton and feel I received a quality education through the Longlac-Geraldton-Beardmore board of education. In Geraldton, you knew who the trustees were and you could talk to them about any concerns. When Bill 104 passes, will we have one overworked and underpaid trustee who will be run off his or her feet attempting to answer constituency concerns? Will we see this trustee once or twice a year and have a 1-800 line set up to talk to this person? Instead of making education more accessible, the Harris government has created such a mess that it will be impossible to have time with these elected trustees, and attempting to get information from this new super school board will be very difficult as well.

How in the world will Superintendent Smith, as an example, from the area 6 school board know the concerns of B. A. Parker public school in Geraldton or Margaret Twomey public school in Marathon? Will Mr Smith be able to supervise the elementary school teacher in Manitouwadge or deal with a leaky roof at the Schreiber high school? The duties of the area superintendent, already cut to the bare bones, will be next to impossible to carry out due to the geographical area we now are part of.

As a funeral director, I have removed many accident victims off Highway 11-17 and Highway 11 due to the severe road conditions. Road conditions any time of the year are dangerous due to cutbacks in road repairs and overall maintenance. Remember, there are thousands of students who have to travel these treacherous highways on a daily basis from home to school and back again at night. Students spend up to three hours a day commuting to and from their area schools each and every day.

These selected trustees will be putting their lives on the line every time they are expected to attend meetings or meet with any school council or tour any school in their jurisdiction. It's unfathomable how you expect these

trustees to have their monthly meetings or various committee meetings.

I think it's unfortunate that this committee has not taken time to visit the communities affected by Bill 104 or the individual schools that are part of area 6. These schools serve a much smaller population base than Metro Toronto and offer a quality education to all of their students. Had the committee taken time and visited schools in these areas and talked to the parents, students, teachers and administration, I feel more would have been accomplished, rather than the formal hearings where the Tory supporters praise the bill and the NDP and Liberal supporters condemn it. Again the Big Blue Machine bulldozes through, dictating to us, the alienated people of the north, what we will be, with no consideration as to distance or the special needs of northern Ontario.

I have been involved with the education of my children for the past seven years. For the first six, my daughters enjoyed a well-rounded education at an elementary school in Thunder Bay called Drew Street school. This school, which educated the youth of the Lakehead for 86 years, was named after the late Tory Premier George Drew and his family. How ironic that it was a Conservative government that forced the closure of this fine institution of learning. My, how Premier Drew would be rolling over in his grave to realize how this heartless Blue Machine called the Harris mob closed a school named after him. The Big Blue Machine is rolling over everyone in its path to put forth a very dictatorial agenda. Are we to address the Premier as Dictator Harris?

Bill 104 will create a large divide in the have- and the have-not schools. The schools in the affluent areas with a higher tax base will fare much better than inner-city schools. Older schools will not receive the proper care and upkeep. Where will the funding come from for capital projects like window replacements or a new roof? Will the Group of Seven sprinkle their fairy dust on the schools that need attention, or will it be the ones that have a very powerful lobby to the government and will get its undivided attention?

As a school council chair, I can honestly say it is very difficult to get volunteers to sit on school councils. Our school, McKellar Park school, is an inner-city school, and I can see our school going downhill with a lack of books, resource materials, computer equipment, poor school maintenance, and a drop in the quality of education, with experienced teachers seeking other schools where more resources are available. Now we have a PTA that is being asked to buy school supplies like computer monitors and computer programs, and help defray the cost of field trips by picking up the transportation costs.

Hearing that school councils will have more jurisdiction and control in the schools will scare off potential volunteers to sit on school councils. Entrapment is what our provincial government has done to the present members of school councils. Very few school council members were aware of the Tory agenda to reform school systems to this degree. I know the discussion around many school councils is: "What does the government expect of us? How much time do they expect volunteers to put into school councils so they can run effectively?" I see a demise of school councils in the near future as

there will be no one willing to donate so much time and energy for no return. Does Mike Harris expect these so-called volunteers to contribute so much time for no reward or payment? I honestly feel the only message school councils could send Mike Harris is a mass resignation of the entire school council body from every school council in the province and tell the Premier to stick it.

Training for school councils is a concern of many. Fortunately, the Lakehead Board of Education has set up a team of parents, teachers and administrators to act as school council facilitators. We have run workshops on consensus-building and will be having additional workshops on running effective meetings and dealing with difficult situations. I am a team member of this facilitator team and we all feel we are contributing to the betterment of school councils within the Lakehead board.

Many smaller boards do not have training teams built in for their school councils. How in the world are these school councils to operate effectively with no training? I understand the Ministry of Education has provided manuals to every school, but hands-on training in group situations goes a lot further than a binder of instruction. Will a manual help a parent who has no idea how to run a meeting or any other aspect of school council? I don't think so.

When you, the government, push school councils, why not cough up money for training as well for all school councils? Other boards in our area have asked for our help. How can we as volunteers give more of our time to do additional training if we don't have the time, energy or resources to help other boards with the training of school councils? As this change to school councils comes from the Harris government, perhaps additional dollars should be put forth for additional training to all school councils.

Special consideration should be given to the smaller, more remote communities like Nakina, which has the Internet link with Queen Elizabeth. We have hundreds of smaller isolated communities that would benefit from additional training to school councils to help them run effectively. We are not Toronto; we are northern Ontario.

A little thought goes a long way. Bill 104 and all of its repercussions on all of northwestern Ontario were not planned. Every student will suffer under this new reform of education. You can't throw out the baby with the bathwater. In this instance you are giving school councils more power and discretion in running the schools with no idea of training for what they are doing and are eliminating effective school boards that have a wide representation of the general public now.

1830

When you look at school budgets, over 80% is salaries and benefits. We have dissected that remaining 20% until the cows come home. Perhaps it's time to tackle the salaries of the high-priced employees of the boards of education. I'm not referring to any of the support services; I'm referring to teachers and administration. I feel I've said enough on the subject.

I'd be more than willing to answer any of your questions. Thank you for your time.

Ms Lankin: Thank you very much, and I truly appreciate your presentation and having your daughter here with you to experience this.

I'm interested in your comments, as a school council chair, about the role of school councils. The proposal is vague at this point, but it's to increase the responsibility of school councils, decrease the responsibility of trustees and put some more decision-making in the ministry. I worry that those trustees will become a buffer between parents and the decision-makers in the bureaucracy. Do you think you can take over the job of trustees? Do you want to take over that job?

Mr Saارين: We were set up as an advisory board. I'm sure 99% of the people who volunteered for school councils wanted that role. No.

Mr O'Toole: Just quickly, has your council seriously debated the issue of where to look at how to have a more effective budget if 80% is salary and wages? Have you actually looked at that as a council and discussed it?

Mr Saارين: No, we haven't.

Mr O'Toole: Is it something that's on your mind?

Mr Saارين: It's something that has been on my mind for several years. I've been involved with school closures. I've looked up the budgets. I've had all the information in front of me.

Mrs McLeod: As Ms Lankin has said, I appreciate your coming and making a presentation, again representing a parent council. I'd like to further the question Ms Lankin was asking. You're obviously an involved parent and you're going to stay involved. I suspect that whatever school your kids are in, you're going to make sure their education is okay. That leads me to ask you why you're so concerned. Is it because you see that if school boards disappear and parent councils are running the show, some are going to get more than others?

Mr Saارين: Basically what I see is over 5,000 mini school boards in the province all fighting for the almighty buck. The smaller, inexperienced schools will be the ones suffering. We're all here for these guys. They're our future. I really want to say this: I wish more parents and more student councils and more kids would come out to these hearings and say something.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much, sir. Sadie, thank you for coming. Good luck.

BEARDMORE, GERALDTON, LONGLAC
AND AREA BOARD OF EDUCATION
LAKEHEAD BOARD OF EDUCATION
LAKE SUPERIOR BOARD OF EDUCATION
NIPIGON-RED ROCK BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the Nipigon-Red Rock and Lake Superior boards of education; Betty Chambers, chair. Please proceed.

Mrs Betty Chambers: Good evening. My name is Betty Chambers. I am chair of the Nipigon-Red Rock Board of Education. I am joined this evening by Joe Virdiramo, director of education for our board and also a shared director with the Beardmore Geraldton Longlac and Area Board of Education. We thank you very much for the opportunity this evening to voice our strong concerns regarding this legislation.

I'm going to take a break from my written report here. Earlier today I think you heard repeatedly about the makeup of district 6 and the fact that the geographical

area is huge, to say the least, and the governance issues that come about through all this new legislation. I'm going to very quickly go over my report, because I would really appreciate the opportunity to have you ask questions of me and Mr Virdiramo, so if you'll just bear with me flipping through.

The new proposed amalgamation of district 6 will not, in our opinion, improve accountability, effectiveness or the quality of education, but rather will have the opposite effect. The drastic reduction of publicly elected representation, possibly in some cases leaving communities or regions without a local voice, reluctant school councils and an added layer of bureaucracy with the Education Improvement Commission and its local committees do not promote accountability, in our opinion; this huge amalgamation achieves the opposite. We have very strong concerns about the public's ability to access this new board. We feel that without access, there is really no accountability.

Bill 104 is incomplete as it does not provide the boards with a funding model, methods of dealing with the harmonizing of collective agreements, capital or contingency concerns. As a trustee, I have been really frustrated to think that I am being asked to make appropriate and informed decisions without knowing exactly what the details are, and I am being constantly asked by ratepayers and staff, employees: "How are we going to be funded? Are we going to continue to have the services that we have now?" I have no answers. I find it very frustrating to have to be sitting here as a chair of a board telling my constituents that I have no answers for them. That's a personal comment.

Education and Training Minister John Snobelen has said that there will be no second-class students in Ontario. In other words, there will be equity of access. In reality, what does this mean for students in the north? Does it mean easy access to professionals servicing students with special needs? Does it mean access to special programming, now difficult due to student numbers, remote locations and limited resources? Does it mean we will now automatically get music programs where none have existed before? Does it mean shorter bus rides for students who currently ride for an hour in the morning and again for an hour in the afternoon?

This concept is excellent, however very difficult if not totally unrealistic, given our northern geography, not to mention fiscal constraints. We are very concerned that to keep this promise, district 6 will either see costs rise for all students or we will see a drastic decrease in services and programs. We recognize the fact that in our boards costs are considerably higher per student than in the Lakehead board — again I would like to just mention that I am speaking on behalf of the three smaller boards, Lake Superior, Nipigon-Red Rock and the Geraldton board — in that we spend a considerable amount above the Lakehead board per pupil. Our average is approximately \$1,000 per year over and above that of the Lakehead board per pupil to deliver education in an outlying region.

The Sweeney and Crombie reports both recognized the uniqueness of northern Ontario. We strongly urge you to do the same.

We question the fact that the Education Improvement Commission, an unelected, unaccountable body, supercedes the authority of a duly elected board. We stress very strongly that the cost, complexity and the time frame dictated by this legislation has costs attached to it, and the significant transition costs must be addressed by this committee. One hour of teleconferencing costs \$250; a round trip to Manitouwadge involves eight to 10 hours from Thunder Bay, if weather permits, and \$240 in mileage. This district 6 board is not able to absorb these expenses without directly impacting on resources to students.

Bill 104 will not improve student learning. Just as effectively, the same ends could have been met by allowing boards like ours to amalgamate where it was reasonable, to voluntarily reduce our number of trustees, to recognize efficiencies where there were great efficiencies in the north and place sanctions against wasteful boards and to recognize many shared services. In our board we have shared busing for over 20 years with our coterminous board. I think we should be recognized for those types of things, which we have been very proactive in doing.

To survive in the north all boards have had to be very innovative and resourceful. Sharing of services and cooperative endeavours have been a way of life. We feel that our three boards have worked very hard to meet the needs of our varied student population, sometimes in very difficult economic climates.

Let me state clearly that we are not opposed to change and recognize that the status quo is not a viable option. But when all is said and done and the final decisions are made with this committee, I trust very strongly that our students will have no less than better than what they have now. We must keep the needs of our students in the forefront and not allow the governance issues of this new legislation to use up all of our energies, and that's what's happening now.

Please hear our concerns. Bill 104 must be amended to recognize the unique needs of northwestern Ontario. Added to this document I have presented, we have a school boards restructuring program. These three boards that I represent plus the Lakehead board have come up with a restructuring program, which you've heard about today, proposing that district 6 be divided into 6A, which is the Thunder Bay board, and 6B, which is the rest of the rural region. One of the main reasons, and it's bulleted under 3.2, is that district school board 6B would be made up of similar-sized communities, eliminating the perception of being swallowed by a large board. We have great respect for the Lakehead board, but this is a major concern with the rural communities.

I would welcome any questions from the panel and Mr Virdiramo would certainly welcome any questions.

1840

Mr Skarica: I'm comparing your brief to Renny Maki's brief. He was one of the trustees with the Lakehead Board of Education, and you've been working with him on the model you've indicated in your presentation.

Mrs Chambers: I've worked with all the trustees. I must mention too that this is a unanimous proposal by every trustee in all four boards.

Mr Skarica: It looks to me like you've done a fair amount of work on it, because it's a very unique model and you're basically having separate boards, but you're merging a lot of your administrative functions, as I read it. Is that correct?

Mrs Chambers: We have a shared service initiative in the middle of these two boards.

Mr Skarica: You say it's unanimous from all the trustees in the boards that this is what you would like us to consider. Is that a fair comment?

Mrs Chambers: This proposal has already gone to the co-chairs of the Education Improvement Commission, and we are awaiting at this point a response. But we have strongly expressed our concerns with the co-chairs and we have worked very hard within the region trying to do what we know is best for our region. I think that's the thing that has to be really stressed. We live here, we work here, our children's future is here. We know what the north is about and we know what's best for the people here.

Mr Joe Virdiramo: I just wanted to add to what Mrs Chambers has said here, your question concerning the presentation and the consent of all the boards. When Ann Vanstone and Dave Cooke were in Thunder Bay, we met with them, all the boards met with them and they said, "If you boards get together and do up a presentation and get unanimous consent on the part of all the boards, that might be considered." It wasn't a promise. Within two weeks all the boards got together, the presentation was put together, the chairs of all the specific boards had three teleconferences and they unanimously passed resolutions at all board sites to support this particular proposal.

Mrs McLeod: I understand that at that same meeting it was also indicated that this committee could be influential in supporting those kinds of recommendations to the EIC. I hope committee members are suitably impressed with the work that was done.

I'll ask you about the whole issue of equity funding. I think the point you're making in your brief is a really important one for us all to understand, because you're saying that it costs you more in your boards to provide less service than is provided to students in the Lakehead, for example. So if you were to have equality of service with what currently exists in the Lakehead, there would have to be a lot more dollars coming into it.

Mrs Chambers: The strong concern right now, and I think the Lakehead board must have some very strong concerns, is that the expectation of the outlying region is very, very high, because the minister is saying "equity of access." What does that mean? What does it mean to boards that have not had programming, that have not had special professional people available to us, that have not had some of the benefits that areas our bigger boards with more enrolment have had that opportunity of? I think these kinds of things, the expectations are very high, and for that to happen something is going to have to be lost. If we're looking at raising the outlying regions in some areas, we're going to be talking about knocking down Lakehead, or vice versa. I think there's going to be lots of give and take, when the day is done, that will not make for a lot of happy campers, because we have some

very good things within our outlying regions too that we do not want to see lost.

Mrs McLeod: If you even equalize to the level of Lakehead funding now, what would that mean to your students?

Mrs Chambers: We would definitely see larger class sizes. We would probably see more students bused. We would see programs go. These are very major concerns to our small boards, and we are all struggling in an economic time to deal with small schools. We all have very small high schools where we are trying desperately to accommodate programming and make our students ready to go on to college and university, with some great difficulties.

Ms Lankin: I appreciate your presentation. I also hear from Mr Skarica some sense of interest in the proposal you've put forward and I'm pleased to hear that. I hope that means the government members of the committee will consider, along with the Liberals and New Democrats, endorsing the proposal you've put forward.

I'm driven to distraction to hear the government refer to this as "new and innovative." In fact, you have been coterminous boards sharing services, as you said, busing for 20 years. You have a shared director of education. Many of the steps which the government lauds as being necessary to end duplication and to share services you've already done. This cookie-cutter approach out of the Ministry of Education doesn't give recognition to those local concerns. My fear is that where you have less responsibility at the school trustee level, less power to actually implement locally related decisions and more of that centralized in the ministry, you lose the ability to understand the local concerns.

Outside of amalgamation, because that's only one piece of this, in the legislation there's also a diminishing of the powers and responsibilities of school trustees, with much more of the decision-making being centralized in the ministry. I'm wondering how you think that will bear for the students and parents and ratepayers of your district.

Mr Virdiramo: Right now at the local level, your ratepayer is your next-door neighbour, your teacher, your student. You're next door; you're right there. At 6:30 in the morning, when there's a tendency for the buses not to run, I get a call from the chair saying: "What are we going to do with the buses, Joe? Do you think we're going to run?" The parents phone the chair to find out what's happening in the system. You will not get that kind of close, intimate relationship with the people you're dealing with. That will not happen.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Chambers. We appreciate your time today.

ATIKOKAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the Atikokan Board of Education; Wayne McAndrew, director of education.

Mr Wayne McAndrew: On behalf of the Atikokan Board of Education, I'd like to extend our appreciation for the opportunity to be here. It came as a bit of a surprise, and unfortunately our chair was unable to be here due to illness, so on her behalf I'll make the presentation.

I understand you've probably been supersaturated with a lot of information today, and in anticipation of that we'll keep our presentation brief. I'd be very happy to answer any questions you may have with regard to our presentation and other information that's been presented today.

By way of introduction, my background is somewhat diverse. I was a director in the Maritimes, in New Brunswick, during amalgamation there and I think I could provide some firsthand insight with regard to some of the implications that took place in the Maritimes. I was also the director of education for the Sioux Lookout district of Indian affairs. That represented the Treaty 9 communities stretching from Highway 17 through the Hudson Bay, so I could perhaps comment on that if you're interested.

With that introduction, I'll begin with my presentation. The trustees representing the students of the Atikokan Board of Education would like to take this opportunity to respond to the government with regard to Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act. Our board has had the opportunity to review the submissions prepared by other area public school boards. Our board fully supports the key elements of these proposals and will not restate these issues. Instead, we have chosen to focus our efforts on several other key issues that we believe should be considered.

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It would appear that the driving force behind the bill rests on the beliefs that there is a need to (a) reduce education costs outside of the classroom and (b) ensure that trustees focus attention on the policy issues of education. In other words, the government is saying we spend too much money outside of the classroom and trustees get too involved in the day-to-day operations of schools.

While trustees across this province clearly take exception to these assumptions, the Atikokan Board of Education takes exception to the misplaced view that Bill 104 offers any constructive financial benefits to northern citizens or any educational benefit to northern students. Clearly, the authors of Bill 104 have little understanding of the economic, geographic, social and political realities of northwestern Ontario. The following observations and suggestions are worth outlining in view of these realities.

It is quite apparent that the one-board model will not provide the financial and educational benefits that the government anticipates. We sincerely recommend that the government revise the proposed boundaries with a view of creating a two-board model or implementing the recommendations made by the Sweeney task force.

A one-board model for this section of the province contradicts the natural patterns of the region. In northwestern Ontario, the economic, social and political borders are naturally shaped by the two major east-west highway networks of the region. The southern corridor is defined by Highway 11, and the northern corridor is centred along Highway 17. Minor north-south roads between these two highways exist to serve the resource industries. In its one-board model, the government plans to overcome a barrier that the private and public sector leaders of the region have been unable to overcome for decades: merging the two corridors. This notion is unsound.

Considerable import on the effective future use of technology has been used to justify the viability of a large geographic board in Ontario's north. The Atikokan Board of Education and indeed most northern boards have been active and positive users of these technologies. We willingly accept the fact that students, teachers, trustees and indeed all stakeholders have and will continue to benefit from these innovations.

It is naïve to think, however, that technology is the answer to most of our geographic challenges. Significant issues relating to the day-to-day operations involving students, parents and community partners will continue to require direct contact. It is incredibly simplistic to think that these valued interchanges can be effectively addressed through technology. While northern Ontario is significantly behind the south in terms of technical infrastructure, the government's assurance to eliminate this gap does not diminish the harsh reality that technology by itself represents a partial solution to the geographic impediments that are central to the government's single-board model for northwestern Ontario.

A critical government justification for the reduction of school boards rests on two criticisms related to trustees: first, that the costs associated with trustees are too high, and second, trustees have historically and unnecessarily overtaxed their ratepayers.

On the first point, trustees throughout the north are incidental costs to education. Honoraria are typically well below the \$5,000 ceiling within the proposed legislation and radically less than the salaries quoted in government press releases. In light of the significant amount of time invested in serving their boards, our trustees represent a valued and cost-effective resource to education in northwestern Ontario.

In terms of the second point, trustees from small-town northwestern Ontario are intimately sensitive to their ratepayers. Similarly, ratepayers are very supportive of trustees and the issues they face. Unlike in southern Ontario, everyone knows everybody in our communities. The fiscal decisions made by trustees continue to respect and build upon the best interests of students and ratepayers.

There is no evidence to suggest that a one-board model will bring about any significant savings to the costs of future trustees, and certainly there is no indication that our taxpayers and students will benefit by replacing residential taxation with increased grants from Queen's Park.

While geography poses an incredible impediment to a one-board approach to public education in northwestern Ontario, clearly Bill 104 failed to recognize the long-standing affiliations among our 50 first nations communities and five public school boards. There exist two major native cultures in northwestern Ontario, the Cree and the Ojibway, with various subgroups within these cultures. Treaty 9 first nations are located north of Highway 17 to Hudson Bay. Treaty 3 first nations are mainly found along the Highway 11 corridor. While both groups share many things in common, they are two fundamentally distinct cultures. Clearly, a two-board structure that utilizes the two major corridors of the region will help protect the positive relationships that exist between public

boards and first nations. A single-board model promotes a generic melting pot approach to its affairs with two very different groups of first nations.

In summary, the Atikokan Board of Education and the citizens of the community find few redeeming features in proposed Bill 104 that improve the financial and/or educational opportunities for its ratepayers and students. It is generally perceived by most local people that the proposed legislation is intended to resolve issues in southern Ontario that have little if any bearing on northern Ontario. We urge you to recognize the special circumstances we face and consider the suggestions that have been outlined above. Your review of this submission is sincerely appreciated.

Mrs McLeod: Do you have any idea where this new proposal for one board came from? Sweeney would have recognized the Highway 11 reality as well as the first nations divisions between the southern and northern parts of that area.

Mr McAndrew: I don't want to be critical of the individual who drew the boundaries, but I suspect he was given an instruction to prepare some boundaries by a certain time and, not having firsthand information, came up with some boundaries. That's how it happened, Lyn. It honestly surprised me. I've been involved in many reorganizations at the federal government level. I was quite surprised that they tried to merge the north and south corridor. I was really surprised, personally.

Mrs McLeod: Another quick question: You're one of the clearest examples of a small, assessment-poor board. You're supposed to be one of the winners under this new equity, "no second-class students in Ontario." Why are you worried?

Mr McAndrew: When you look at the Atikokan board, you have to understand trustees. Trustees there honestly don't perceive themselves as being politicians. They don't see it that way. They see themselves serving students and they make some tough decisions that sometimes need to be made.

I'm worried that with school councils — they've been in Atikokan for decades, but they don't want to get involved in the special interest group things that school boards get involved in because you know everybody in so many different circumstances. The board provides a level of objectivity that's not available at the local level, because you're on the hockey executive, you're on the church committee and so many things. When you have to make a tough call in a school committee over student discipline or a suspension, it's a tough call because you know the other person in so many different ways. There's a great worry that when you lose that school board you lose that objectivity, and we're afraid we end up with vested interest in some significant decisions that involve kids.

It's interesting to note too, when you talk about the number of trustees, that there are unfortunately several obstacles that cause us to have as many trustees as we do. One is the Education Act. As a director I'm always baffled when I have a trustee retire and I want to reduce him, when we want to reduce the number of trustees, that we can't. We as a board knew the pressures we were under financially province-wide. We tried to cut costs in

so many ways and we were quite successful, but amazingly in some areas we couldn't do it.

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Ms Lankin: I want to follow up on the questions in the area you've just moved into. The majority of your presentation, rightly so, is on the issue of the one board and the absurdity of that from a northerner's perspective. I think the government is hearing that and I'm hoping they're going to move on that point, but it strikes me that there are many other aspects to the bill that we should be talking about as well.

The diminished role of the trustees, whether it's one board or two, gives me great concern. You've spoken to one side of it, which is the potential for smaller, narrower interest-driven processes at the school council. I also want you to address the other end of it, those decisions that are going to be taken up into the ministry. You just talked about how someone down in Toronto drew the boundaries obviously without knowledge of up here. Do you worry about the board becoming essentially a buffer between the parents' concerns and ratepayers' concerns and the decision-makers in the ministry in Toronto?

Mr McAndrew: Yes, it is absolutely unfounded to think that the day-to-day key issues that make a school successful can be managed from Queen's Park. The ministry can provide a lot of excellent tools and a lot of excellent information, but to think they could manage that is unlikely and it will not happen; that's fair to say.

But my sense is that school boards and people like myself — we're called so many names, but to be quite honest, my job is to free teachers from a lot of the things that get in the way of teaching. If trustees take over some of those tough policy issues and some of the tough operational issues and take them away from the school level, you are empowering your principal and your vice-principal and your teacher to do what they have to do. You just need to read the journals and look at the stories from Chicago and in California where you try to take those things and put them too far down. You've got to empower those teachers to serve those students. My worry is that when you take school boards out of the equation, Queen's Park will not manage those quality decisions. Who will?

Mr Skarica: Two quick questions, again going to the point that you made about the large boards. We heard from the Dryden, Fort Frances, Rainy River and Kenora board this morning; they basically indicated that they would be content with amalgamating those three boards and that you, along with the Red Lake board, would amalgamate into another board, that you all have agreed to that. Is that right?

Mr McAndrew: That's correct.

Mr Skarica: We also heard from the Lakehead board and the surrounding boards that they would basically, if they weren't merged, merge a lot of their services. Is that something you've explored with the five boards I've mentioned, of which you are one?

Mr McAndrew: That is already taking place now. For example, we have Program Council West, a regional consortium dealing with all sorts of professional development issues, and we have a number of other cooperatives. But I want to speak on that in one point that's important,

because you're looking at it as I did in other positions, in other geographies.

A lot of the consortia cooperative things that happen in these small communities happen with other sectors in a community, whereas if you're in Toronto and you have economies of scale you might look at your coterminous school board as the natural marriage. I'll give you a simple example. Atikokan, 210 kilometres from Thunder Bay, speech pathology: How do you do it? If you're in southern Ontario you'd look to your partner board and work out a marriage. When you get into small northern Ontario, you break those rules; you look at child and family services, you look at medical clinics and you look at everybody else. In the case of Atikokan, with three other partners, we hired a pathologist for Atikokan. I get the person some of the time, the old-age home gets him some of the time, and the hospital and the Catholic school board.

There are lots of consortia, but it doesn't follow a lot of the lines we're familiar with. My worry is that when you go into a broader context you lose some of those opportunities because you're not at the front line. I meet with all the business and social folks monthly, and when you see an opportunity you jump at it in Atikokan. I'm not convinced — and we'll just have to deal with it — that we'll be able to manage those opportunities for places like Atikokan in a broader context.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr McAndrew, for putting your views to the committee and coming such a long way to do it.

FORT FRANCES-RAINY RIVER DISTRICT ROMAN CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD

The Chair: The Dryden and Fort Frances-Rainy River District Roman Catholic Separate School Board, Paul Jackson. Welcome, Mr Jackson. We're happy to have you here. As you begin your presentation, I wonder if you might introduce your co-presenter.

Mr Paul Jackson: I was just about to do that. I have with me this evening the chair of the Fort Frances-Rainy River district separate school board. I just want to clarify that the brief we're presenting to the standing committee this evening is the one prepared for the Fort Frances-Rainy River district. I'll have the opportunity of presenting the brief prepared from the Dryden district separate board to Annamarie when we meet on Thursday in Kenora. This is directed from the community west of us here right at the very end of Ontario, Fort Frances-Rainy River.

The Chair: Mr Jackson, would you mind introducing the chairman by name?

Mr Jackson: I'm sorry. Our board chair is Orielle De Gagné.

Mr Orielle De Gagné: How do you do?

Mr Jackson: The Fort Frances-Rainy River District Roman Catholic Separate School Board welcomes the opportunity to appear before the standing committee this evening to address its concerns about Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, 1997.

This brief is limited to those concerns about Bill 104 on which the board has particularly strong feelings. This

perspective is not meant in any way to relegate other issues to a lower level of importance. Indeed, the board wants to go on record as supporting all aspects of the brief presented to your committee by the Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association on February 18, 1997.

Some particulars about our board: We're located in the town of Fort Frances, approximately 340 kilometres west of here, 210 kilometres southeast of the town of Kenora and 184 kilometres south of the town of Dryden. Its jurisdiction includes the towns of Fort Frances, Emo, Rainy River, as well as seven other small townships and approximately 20 other unorganized municipalities. The electoral population for the board is approximately 2,800 and the geographical area of the board is approximately 11,913 square kilometres.

The board currently offers an elementary level education program — we are non-extended — for JK through grade 8, and a French immersion program in the town of Fort Frances which runs from senior kindergarten through grade 8. Graduates of our system attend the public high schools in Fort Frances and Rainy River. We currently have 713 students enrolled in our three elementary schools, two of these located in Fort Frances and one located in a small community west of Fort Frances called Stratton. The students are served by 33.85 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 19 support staff. We currently have three tuition agreements with the 10 first nations in the Rainy Lake tribal region.

Our board was formed in 1969 when the small separate boards located in Fort Frances, Morley-Dilke and Rainy River were amalgamated. Currently, our school communities are about 58 kilometres apart. That's the distance from Fort Frances to Stratton. If the proposed amalgamation of the Fort Frances-Rainy River, Dryden and Kenora district separate boards becomes a reality, the distance between some of our school communities could be as far as 340 kilometres. That is the distance between Stratton and our school in Sioux Lookout, Ontario. This is indeed a tremendous distance for any area in the province but is particularly concerning in northwestern Ontario when our road and weather conditions are taken into consideration.

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Funding of education is also a concern. We feel that the legislative enactment of Bill 104 will improve Ontario's system only if it is accompanied by legislation which issues an equitable and improved educational opportunity for all children in the province, ensures respect and justice for all those who provide education and guarantees the constitutionally protected rights of our Catholic educational systems.

As Bill 104 is implemented, the government must put in place a new, fair funding model which will achieve equal educational opportunity for all children in Ontario. It is in recognition of this promise of equitable funding that our board, along with other Catholic boards across the province, is holding in abeyance and not exercising our constitutional right to tax. We expect, however, that the designation of taxes will continue through the regular enumeration process.

Electorate issues are another concern. Our board feels strongly that there are a number of critical issues to be considered when determining the number of trustees for

the district school board. If representation by population becomes the key criterion to be used by the government in making this decision, the amalgamated board which the Fort Frances-Rainy River district separate board will become a part of will most likely be limited to the minimum number of five trustees as set out in Bill 104.

Under this bill, our board will be merged with the Dryden separate board and the Kenora district separate board. Their combined population area is relatively small when viewed from a provincial standpoint.

Our board believes that the proposal in Bill 104 to establish district school boards with as few as five trustees will compromise its ability to meet its responsibilities as educational stewards for the northwestern Ontario Catholic school community. Indeed, with such a limited number, whole communities in our part of the province will be left without representation.

The government must consider such factors as geography, distance and rural sparsity when determining the number of trustees. Five trustees is not an adequate number. Catholic parents will be left without representation on their district school board.

Our board is also concerned with the ability of district school boards in northwestern Ontario to attract people to serve as trustees. Faced with board meetings requiring two- to three-hour drives, weekend scheduling and being away from home overnight, our board sees problems in getting people to step forward and take on the responsibilities of a board trusteeship.

Another area of concern is administration of our district school board. Our board currently operates with a minimal number of supervisory officers. It employs a half-time director of education and a full-time superintendent of business. The director's services are shared with the Dryden district separate school board. That board employs the director of education on a half-time basis as well.

As a board that currently operates in an efficient, cost-effective manner, we strongly recommend that the government provide sufficient funding for the district school board to operate in a similar fashion. Research needs to be done to determine the minimal level funding needed to provide for the effective operation of the administrative function of regional boards in northern Ontario. Once set, this amount can serve as a base level and be adjusted upwards in situations where greater school population so demands. The money must be there to provide the administrative and support staff necessary to provide efficient and effective management for its programs and services. Geography, distance and the special needs of small Catholic boards in the north must be taken into consideration when setting the fiscal limitations for the district board's administration and support functions. Without this special consideration, the amalgamation process in our district will not improve efficiencies and cost-effectiveness.

Over the years our board has been able to accumulate a reserve fund through a consistent effort to effectively manage our financial resources. The funds from these reserves have come from our local ratepayers, and these funds must be protected and designated for use in those school communities for which they were raised.

Employees affected by amalgamation are another concern. School board amalgamation will result in board employees across the province losing their jobs. In north-western Ontario, geography and distance will play a factor in the downsizing process. Some long-term employees will find it impossible to relocate in order to maintain a position with the school board. The government must provide guidelines and resources to allow boards to follow clearly defined principles of social justice in dealing with redundant staff.

In conclusion then, in our appearance before the standing committee today, the Fort Frances-Rainy River District Roman Catholic Separate School Board has outlined a number of concerns it has that are relevant to the reorganization of school boards in this province. Its concerns all relate to providing the best possible education for Catholic students in northwestern Ontario. For this to occur, there must be equity in funding across the province, sufficient trustee representation to provide access for all parents and students and a level of administrative and support staff to ensure quality, cost-effective education for our kids.

Beyond these concerns, the board still has serious reservations about the quality of service that can be delivered through an amalgamated district school board of the geographical size that has been proposed. Even with today's technological support, the logistics of operating a relatively small school system over a vast expanse of Ontario will be extremely difficult. We are also concerned for the safety of our future trustees, administration and staff who, in order to fulfil their duties, will need to travel greater distances under the road and weather conditions that are unique to our part of the province.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We have about a minute per caucus.

Ms Lankin: I appreciate your presentation. There are a number of areas I would like to pursue with you, but due to time, I'm going to pick up on your comments about protection of reserve funds. I think that's an interesting point. There is no guarantee at this point in time that those reserve funds would not be subject to raiding by the provincial treasury, let alone a guarantee that within any kind of new board, pooled structure those funds would remain local and not be pooled across the new board entity. Do you have concerns about that? Are there, for example, situations you're aware of where there are coterminous boards that you think perhaps have not been as fiscally prudent and don't have the same reserve funds or that have financial problems that you would end up funding through your reserve funds? What gave rise to that concern you've brought forward?

Mr Jackson: Our communities in Fort Frances, Dryden and Kenora are somewhat distinct because of the distance between them. They don't merge in any sense at all, and indeed our concern relates to the fact that the ratepayers of each of those communities have contributed to those reserve funds, and certainly through wise fiscal management. I believe sincerely — and it's certainly indicated by the number of administrative staff we have now — that we manage very wisely. We share resources between Dryden and Fort Frances, for example, in a

semi-amalgamated way. But our concern is — those moneys are raised locally; they really aren't seen as being shared, because of the distance between communities — I think we would have a reaction from our ratepayers if the money is shared.

Ms Lankin: Are you looking for a guarantee in the legislation that this won't be forced upon you?

Mr Jackson: I'm looking for something in the guidelines that will give direction on that. I think that is needed, and I'm not saying here that any of the boards we are looking at being merged with, those in Dryden and Kenora, are not wisely managed as well. But I think those funds should remain in the local community, and our trustees feel strongly about that.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr Jackson, for your presentation. To reiterate your opening remarks, I want to be clear that you're supportive of the Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association as remarked on February 18, a position of recognizing the important achievement of Bill 104 in its recognition of the four constitutional groups. That's important, you're agreeing?

Mr Jackson: Yes. Our trustees —

Mr O'Toole: I just wanted to ask you if you have — I imagine you're familiar with the OECTA position by their president, Ms Rettig. Her view is very much disposed to be averse to your view. Are you familiar with her position, the president of the English Catholic teachers' union?

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Mr Jackson: Yes, we are familiar with that position.

Mr O'Toole: Do you support her view, or are you of the opinion that her view is a serious concern for the Catholics in Ontario, or is she misleading the people of Ontario?

Ms Lankin: "Misleading" is out of order.

Mr O'Toole: It's a fair question.

Mr Jackson: I think you're leading me a bit there. I can say our trustees are supportive of the OSSTA brief which was received by the committee on February 18.

The Chair: Mr O'Toole, I ask you to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Mr O'Toole: There's a difference of opinion. I don't think it's important. My own view is that —

The Chair: I understand, but you can ask the question to say, is there a difference or why —

Mr O'Toole: I was asking him a question, if he felt it was misleading.

The Chair: I'd ask you to withdraw that adjective, please.

Mr O'Toole: I'll reword it, if I may.

Ms Lankin: Withdraw it.

Mr O'Toole: No, I'm rewording it so it's clear.

The Chair: I'd like you to withdraw it and then you can reword it if you wish.

Mr O'Toole: I'm prepared to withdraw and reword.

The Chair: Thank you. That's fine.

Ms Lankin: Time's up.

The Chair: Mr Miclash.

Mr Miclash: Thank you very much, Mr Jackson and Mr De Gagné, for your presentation here today. You mentioned trustees, and that's come up a number of times during the presentations today. A good number of people

feel that the trustees will not reflect the actual student population. You talked a little bit about the student population from our first nations, other presenters have mentioned the student population of single parents, and we've heard about student trustees as well. What further recommendations can you make, in terms of trustees, that you think would be a good number for representation and how these trustees could maybe be attracted to the positions for the committee? What recommendations could you make?

Mr Jackson: That is a difficult question to answer. We have difficulty at times getting parents to serve on school councils, but recommendations for numbers — we certainly feel that five is far too few when you're considering that our district school board will run from Sioux Lookout through Kenora, north of Kenora and then down to Rainy River in the far southwestern corner of Ontario. Our thoughts were that we would need to have more than five. I think it would have to be in the range of 10 to 12 to adequately serve the area.

As far as attracting trustees, I think that will be a challenge, and I really don't have any answers to that.

The Chair: Gentlemen, on behalf of the committee, thank you very much for coming here and for coming from such a long way as well.

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION, THUNDER BAY AND KENORA DIVISIONS

The Chair: The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Thunder Bay and Kenora. Welcome. I wonder if you might identify yourself for the record.

Ms Arlene Gervis: My name is Arlene Gervis, and I represent District 29 of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, which takes in the Lakehead and points east.

Mr Dave Rhind: I'm Dave Rhind, president of Kenora division of OSSTF.

Ms Gervis: We've decided to each take 7.5 minutes of this presentation. My presentation is the one in blue, I'd like to walk through it with you, highlight what's in it and then speak to it if I may. I've got three parts here. The first part is called "The Lamentation"; the second part is "A Point of Consensus," on page 3; and the third part is "The Guide." I have also added two appendices to it. One is the production of statistics that was gleaned from both the US Department of Education and Stats Canada. I have also attached, as have a couple of other representations from the new district board 6, the proposed plan for district boards 6A and 6B. I'll speak to that as I go through.

Part 1, The Lamentation: I think a lot of points have been covered throughout the day that include the geography, that include the new powers that perhaps are going to be given to the school councils, all those things that most people are in opposition to. I'd like to point out a couple of things, though, towards the bottom of page 1. One is the change in power from the trustees to the school councils. There is a concern here that I think you must seriously address. The question has to be asked,

"Who in their right mind would run for election as a trustee?" given the time commitment and the lack of compensation for such a token job that has no power.

We have heard that the government intends to promote the evolution of stronger school councils, and it doesn't take much of a reality check to realize that most parents and business people do not have the resources to commit to such an amount of time and commit to the substantial training required to do an adequate job. You are asking for these people to accept the responsibility and potential liability without compensation, so please consider that point of what's being expected for volunteers. We've been rather fortunate in attracting knowledgeable parents to our school councils in Thunder Bay, but it's questionable how long they'll be able to sustain their efforts. Once their children move on, in all likelihood so will they. Continuity is an issue.

To sum up the "lament" part of this presentation, please seriously consider two aspects that I'd like to emphasize: first that swing of power from duly elected trustees to volunteer school councils, because of the obvious inherent difficulties; and secondly, the loss of local power to fund locally determined needs. That whole issue of funding is still in question. Without the proper funding model, it's hard to really give an intelligent criticism of Bill 104 when we don't know exactly where that accountability is going to come from.

Part 2, The Consensus: I have met or at least spoken with principals and teachers throughout our district, which includes the whole area of the new district board 6, and together we comprised a list of needs that you'll find in part 3, but I want you to know that I have discussed them and represent the district in this regard. There is much merit in separating the Lakehead, in this new model that I have attached to the back and that you have received in some of the others as well, from the smaller communities in the areas we've proposed in this document or that the boards have proposed in that document. There are clear differences between the larger and smaller communities. I think others have pointed out the funding differences, and that is of grave concern to us in the Lakehead.

There's a string attached to our support for this alternative proposal. It calls for the regional shared services agency and lists several areas of jurisdiction that are fine, and it also lists those in the area of labour relations and negotiations. There are differences in our collective agreements that must not be lost. Our little string to supporting it is to make sure that recognition is given to the diversity within those agreements that presently exist and that federation representation on the decision-making bodies which deal with teacher-related issues be assured.

We were somewhat reassured by Ann Vanstone and David Cooke on their recent fact-gathering mission to Thunder Bay, that they recognized our diversity and indicated their personal commitment to allowing for divergent collective agreements within the boundaries of the new district boards. Clearly, this is important enough to become a part of our guide that follows in part 3.

I want to mention that District 29 of OSSTF follows the boundaries pretty closely of the new proposed model,

so we don't see a great difficulty for our own personal organization representing the teachers in the new proposed district board 6.

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It's important that if a local education improvement committee is going to be struck, in addition to their obvious problems of administering, auditing, budgeting and operating plant, there are the 10 points I list in this guide that deal with the primary business of the boards of education; that is, in classrooms, their teachers and their students. That's what this list is all about. If Bill 104 passes and we establish these local committees, these 10 items are what we came up with as priority items. I'm just going to mention the 10 because I want to give Dave his due time too.

- (1) We need employee representation on the EICs.
- (2) We must make sure there's time for familiarity so the EICs, the education improvement committees, will get to know the communities they're going to represent.
- (3) We must look at the differentiated costs, and I think others have brought up that aspect.
- (4) There are some smaller communities that have NSL agreements, native as a second language, that must be honoured and can't be forgotten.
- (5) We have to look out for the high-tech pitfalls. I want to mention that one in particular, because it seems to me that we're starting to depend more and more on distance education. Distance education will solve some distance problems — it's a useful tool — but it cannot replace the teacher in the classroom.
- (6) There needs to be additional funding in technical areas. Some of the smaller boards have gone in different directions than the Lakehead board, and vice versa, in establishing the communications technology.
- (7) We have to consider the workload. We're going to have to take a look at those who are going to be doing this job over the next transitional time and account for that in the funding.
- (8) This is of particular importance, and those from the outlying areas really wanted me to emphasize this one for sure. We have to acknowledge the one-industry-town problem. Schools and teachers in one-industry towns — and I think the gentleman from Atikokan spoke quite eloquently to this too — are inextricably tied socially and economically to the town's main employer. They're extremely sensitive to the cost of living and the social obligations that fluctuate with the good and bad times of their neighbours in their communities. That has to be considered.
- (9) Respect the importance of home and family, that home community education must be a top priority. We can't start expecting to ship our students off to other areas and take them away from their families.
- (10) Honour the differences in staff needs: Differences in collective agreements — and this is the one I referred to in part 2 — need to be respected and maintained. For example, employees in smaller communities require travel time for medical and legal services only available in Thunder Bay and they have accounted for that in their collective agreements. Staffing of the schools is different in those smaller communities and it has evolved with

their varying needs. There's not one staffing formula that can suit the needs of all of our communities. That's why we were a little reassured when Ann Vanstone and David said, yes, that has to be recognized.

To conclude, even though we see the change that Bill 104 proposes as overwhelmingly destructive to education as we know it right now, we are not so naïve as to think that change will never come. As primarily teachers we would be negligent if we did not point out what must be safeguarded as the government stands on the brink of dismantling the present system. That is why first we lament, then we offer an alternative, and then finally list what is essential for survival for quality education in northwestern Ontario.

Mr Rhind: In the interest of time, you have my submission, but on the drive down here, which takes six hours, 300 miles, I decided to redo everything. I'm just going to read from a statement.

I want to talk to you as both a concerned educator and as a parent with three kids in the public system, as well as a ratepayer from the town of Kenora. This name of Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, does not do it justice. It isn't really about just reducing the number of school boards. It is about dismantling education as we know it in Ontario. My colleagues and I have some very grave concerns; I as a parent have grave concerns about this bill and what it is going to do to education in the small towns. I'm here today basically to relay those fears to you.

One of the things we fear most is the loss of accessibility to decision-makers. In small towns you know your trustees. In the larger board that is going to be created for us — I'm going to call it a mega-board, and I'll avoid saying how large it actually is because I hear you're getting tired of that — there will be no chance to get to know these trustees. We're being told we get two, and that's it, for an area that large. Distance is always a major problem. Our closest neighbouring town is 90 miles away. That's two hours, give or take, on good days, and the roads in northwestern Ontario are not the greatest. The longest distances people will travel are five or six hours. This is to go from one school in the board to another school in the same board.

I fear most probably for the loss of the school family. In small northern towns, schools are often the focal point of the community. They provide not just the three Rs but a fourth R: recreation. In our town every member of the school family, from the trustee to the school secretary, custodian, teacher, parent, student, maintenance, you name it, are all part of that family. Each has a role to play in the operation of the school. Bill 104 would leave large gaps in that family and would, in my opinion, result in its eventual death.

As an educator, I decry the demise of democratic principles and rights contained in Bill 104. The creation of appointed commissions to oversee operations of duly elected boards is an example. That such a commission possesses almost dictatorial powers over budgets, staff, assets etc and their decisions may not be challenged or reviewed by the courts is contrary to the principle that no one is above the law.

Finally, my colleagues and I are concerned about the fate of our collective agreements. To say otherwise would be an insult. It is no easy task to amalgamate contracts from five boards into one, especially as these agreements have come to reflect local concerns and local issues over the last 20 years or so. Issues such as seniority, benefits and staff transfers must be settled within the framework of collective bargaining, not at the discretion of an appointed commission. Teacher input into this process is essential to put an end to the anxiety — and that's right, it is anxiety — which is already hurting teacher morale in the north.

As a parent I fear the loss of accessibility and accountability which the new northern mega-board creates. The decision-makers, wherever they may be — and no one knows quite where that board will be — are going to be so many hours of driving away from several of the towns their decisions will affect. How accountable are 12 trustees going to be, trying to run a board that size?

I fear the loss of programs which will result from the further reductions in funding in education. As I said before, an integral part of life in the north are the extras provided by the local school, yet Bill 104 would allow for reduction of funding to all but classroom expenditures. That's teacher, book and an assistant, if you're lucky. What about sports teams, library, drama, music, clubs etc? The list goes on.

As a parent I also fear the loss of democratic rights inherent in an all-powerful Education Improvement Commission over which I have no control.

Last, as a citizen of a small community I am very concerned about the potential downloading of costs connected with maintenance and capital construction of school buildings. In my town this is a potential \$7-million bill on a small tax base. Who pays?

In conclusion, I would like to say this bill and the rhetoric surrounding it remind me very much of George Orwell's doublepeak: Bad is good, less is more, and slavery is freedom.

Last, here are some questions I was asking myself on the drive down. You have lots of time when you've got six hours on the road.

Will the removal of locally elected independent school boards improve quality and accountability? Will the demoralization of the entire school family — and I include trustee, teacher, secretary, custodian — actually improve education for our students in small northern towns? Will the potential dumping of large outside-classroom expenses, like building maintenance, on the local taxpayer create an improved, fairer education system leading to greater student success or a multi-tiered system, one for the rich and one for the not-so-rich communities? As I said at the beginning, I fear for the future of education in Ontario. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Rhind, for coming so far and for sharing your views with us. Thank you both for being here this evening.

Mr Duncan: I have a question for the parliamentary assistant. On page 4 of the presentation, Ms Gervis indicated, "We were somewhat reassured by Ann Vanstone and David Cooke on their recent fact-gathering mission to Thunder Bay, that they recognized our diversity and

indicated their personal commitment to allowing for divergent collective agreements within the boundaries of the new district boards." Is that the view of the government as well?

Mr Skarica: This is the first I've heard of it, quite frankly, and I don't know that. But I would think the statements they are making would be the view of the government or they wouldn't be making them.

Mr Duncan: I'm going to put that as a question, please, to have a written response to. I would be curious to know how committed the government is to that. We will raise this question with school boards and others in the future, as they come in, to see if they feel that would be an ideal situation.

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The Chair: All right, that's raised as a question.

Ms Lankin: I just want a clarification. Mr Skarica, did I just hear you say that you didn't know but you assumed that would be the view of the government or these two individuals would not be putting that forward?

Mr Skarica: I think it would be irresponsible for them to make statements to a community that they couldn't —

Ms Lankin: I must say, that raises a question for me in terms of the role of the Education Improvement Commission and the independence of its two co-chairs in their recommendation to the government. Quite frankly, if you're suggesting these two people are simply a rubber-stamp for the government's policies or mouthpieces for the government's policies, I don't believe those two individuals believe that is their role. I think you should provide some clarification. I don't think that is an accurate reflection of the responsibilities you propose to set out for them in this legislation.

The Chair: Mr Duncan has asked for a written response and we'll ascertain it at that time.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, I think Ms Lankin's question is somewhat different. It's the same question that came to me. Either they are the spokespersons for the government or they are dictating government policy. Either way, I think that is unacceptable. We then need some clarification, first of all, of the powers already extended and about to be extended.

The second question I want to place is in relation to Mr Duncan's question. If it is indeed to be the policy of either the EIC or the government or both that existing collective agreements be honoured as they are, I would want to know exactly how that will be reflected in the funding that's given to the boards.

Mr Skarica: I can't give you an answer to that now. I was advised by some of the ministry personnel that their role, as you know, is to advise the minister and so on and so forth. I'll get further clarification on the question.

DOUG HEIKKINEN

The Chair: I call Douglas Heikkinen. Mr Heikkinen, welcome. You have 10 minutes for your presentation.

Mr Doug Heikkinen: My name is Doug Heikkinen. I live in Oliver township, just bordering Thunder Bay. I am a lifelong resident of the Thunder Bay area and have had my entire education at local elementary schools, local high schools and Lakehead University. I have three

young children currently enrolled in a local elementary school. I am close to finishing my second year on the school council at my children's school and I am the vice-chair of that council.

I am an owner of a business in Thunder Bay which currently has approximately 80 staff, most of whom are graduates of the local education system. Through my business I pay substantial education taxes. I'm a chartered accountant who specializes in business mergers, acquisitions and business re-engineering.

I mention these matters so you understand that I'm a very serious, concerned citizen with the interests of my children and my livelihood at stake and that my background gives me a credible basis for giving input to this process.

That said, I must also make it clear that I am speaking only on behalf of myself tonight. I am not purporting to represent the school council I belong to, to represent my staff or my profession or any other group. The views I express here are mine, and I will state that I voice support for Bill 104.

In terms of governance, I believe the needs of the communities in terms of overall governance issues, such as budget control, adherence to ministry requirements, procurement matters and human resource matters, can be better addressed by a single, more focused board. Boards currently try to govern every aspect of the delivery of educational services. I don't believe day-to-day operating issues can be effectively dealt with at the board level. They need to be dealt with at the school level. And there is no need to do it at the board level; there are many other resources to draw from.

Each school currently has a dozen or more highly trained and highly experienced education professionals. I don't believe we give them enough credit. It is my belief that over the years a combination of influences has created a situation where these professionals have been deprived of the ability to exercise their judgement freely, even though they have the training and the experience to do so. I believe a number of decision-making functions which are currently controlled at the board level can quite easily be handled at the school level.

I have yet to meet a principal in any of the schools I have been associated with over the many years whom I would not be able to trust to make very sensible decisions in consultation with the teachers in their school. This is a vast resource which the boards could easily empower to address many issues. In so doing, issues would also be addressed in a more timely manner and in a manner which better addresses the specific needs of the particular school or the particular student. We have to get away from the notion that each school should be run identically. Each school and each student is unique and needs to be governed with flexibility to address their uniqueness.

Parents represent another resource which is vastly underutilized in the educational structure. These parents, such as myself, were educated in our schools. They are very capable people and they know the students and the communities. Yet their role in education has long been reduced to helping out at events, helping out at recess, helping out at lunch and fund-raising. While these are valuable contributions, many of these people have very

valuable insights and creative minds with respect to the educational process and they can be of great assistance to the teachers and the boards in carrying out their roles at the school. For too long the parents of Ontario have been deprived of participating in the true decision-making that goes into the formal education of their children. I believe they want to be involved and they have every right to be more involved.

I don't believe Bill 104 will be a success without empowering more decision-making at the school level and I believe appropriate school council structures will have to be in place for the boards to successfully operate.

I believe northern Ontario is unique in terms of the distances and the relatively sparse populations. By substantially shrinking the number of boards, I must conclude that the resulting boards will require additional resources to deal with the necessary communication linkages and the necessary travel costs and difficulties I'm sure you've heard about from other groups today, for both the board members and the senior management who will have to govern.

Further, we need to ensure that you understand that much of northern Ontario can be thought of almost as rural schools. We need you to recognize the difficulties that rural-type schools have. We need you to recommend that the standards for things such as special education requirements, busing requirements, even things such as pupil-teacher ratios be reviewed for the uniqueness of northern Ontario. I believe that children who ride the bus for an hour and a half before school don't always learn as well as those who don't have to do that. I believe there are special education needs outside of Thunder Bay that aren't addressed as well as they are in Thunder Bay. I don't always believe that a split class works as well as a single-grade class. I believe Bill 104 provides an opportunity for the ministry to begin addressing some of the unique needs of the north.

I am confident there will be financial savings in the north as a consequence of the implementation of this bill. I'm requesting that those savings be earmarked for reinvestment back into this region. I suggest the following priorities:

- (1) Ensure that those residents who do step forward to take on the task of being board members on what I've heard referred to as these mega-boards have the tools and the budget necessary to get those communication and transportation matters dealt with.

- (2) That there be investment to implement an empowered school council structure.

- (3) That whatever is left go directly into investment to help equalize the opportunities for learning in our northern schools.

In northern Ontario, I see these three as the most effective manner to reinvest savings to ensure improvement of front-line education. I see Bill 104 as an important first step towards a more effective system, which will involve more of us in the education of our children and will free up money for front-line education, putting children first.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Heikkinen. You've used up all of your time. We thank you very much for taking the time to come here.

Mr Heikkinen: Thank you for having me.

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THUNDER BAY AND DISTRICT
LABOUR COUNCIL
SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION, LOCAL 268

The Chair: The Thunder Bay and District Labour Council, Evelina Pan. Good evening. Thanks for being with us this evening. Might I ask you to introduce your co-presenters and then you have 15 minutes.

Ms Evelina Pan: Certainly. My name is Evelina Pan and I'm the president of the Thunder Bay and District Labour Council. To my right is Glen Oram, who is acting vice-president and local director of the service employees union, Local 268.

I'd like to start by saying that the Thunder Bay and District Labour Council is happy to have been granted status to present here today. Many groups and organizations weren't so lucky. Based on the number of requests, the government should have been able to get the message that fewer democratically elected school boards is an important issue to Ontarians and more time should have been allotted for regional consultations.

Nevertheless, this lack of concern for the wishes of the people of Ontario shouldn't surprise us. After all, this is a government that has launched the most wide-ranging assault against democracy ever seen. This is a government that was elected by barely one in three Ontarians. They think we're stupid and we can't see what they're doing. They think that by changing the way public education is funded we will think they're saving money. This simply isn't so. Bill 104 takes away the taxing power school boards have had up till now and replaces it with a system of provincial grants based on a funding formula that hasn't even been worked out yet.

They want to dismantle what has worked for generations and replace it with — well, we don't know what they want to replace it with because they haven't decided yet. In any case, the people of Ontario will still pay for education. However, we will be deprived of the opportunity to elect the representatives from within our own communities to make decisions on our behalf.

The government says that residential property taxpayers will no longer be required to bear the burden of funding education, which implies that paying for the education of our children and our future is an unwelcome hardship, when in fact what the government aims at is eliminating local democracy and participation in determining education programs while transferring funds from education to the corporate sector.

A clear example of the undemocratic intent of Bill 104 is the so-called Education Improvement Commission, which is not an elected body but one appointed by cabinet. Who will be the five to seven members? What say will Ontarians have in how the selections are made? Cutting the number of trustees and capping their remuneration at \$5,000 is most certainly another attack on our democratic rights. After all, how many people can afford to work at an almost full-time position for only \$5,000? How can so few truly represent such a large geographic territory? With the stroke of a pen, the Harris Tory government wants to wipe out decades of hard work done

at collective bargaining negotiations between unions and employers.

The promotion and facilitation of outsourcing of non-instructional services is another example of their truly anti-democratic, anti-worker agenda. Outsourcing is just a nicer way of saying contracting out, which is also a euphemism for getting rid of decent-paying jobs. Workers and employers — in this case, school boards — have collectively bargained language to ensure that there will be little or no contracting out of work performed by employees of the board. Contracting out not-for-profit public service jobs to private, for-profit businesses turns the function of providing an education to students into a business where profit determines what happens, rather than the needs of the children getting an education.

Contracting out usually means that those left in the public service are forced to do more with less, straining capabilities, because private contractors cut corners to increase their profits without regard to the quality of the educational experience, both inside and outside the classroom. In order for school boards to make ends meet, more and more are turning to corporations to help fund various school programs. Corporations and businesses don't give money or materials away out of an altruistic sense of community; far from it. They do it to get name recognition among children from the very earliest age. This is not only crass, it also attempts to indoctrinate children with corporate culture, rather than encourage independent and critical thought.

Bill 104 is a vicious attack on education, on children and on working people in general. If this government had so much as a shred of decency, it would scrap the bill entirely. There is nothing in it that's worth salvaging.

At this point, I'd like to turn over the rest of the labour council's time to Local 268, SEIU, which was the only union that we know of which had applied for standing and was not granted standing.

Mr Glen Oram: My name is Glen Oram and I'm the acting vice-president and a local director of the Service Employees International Union, Local 268. Our union represents approximately 300 support staff employed by four school boards in northwestern Ontario. Our members work as custodians, maintenance workers, clerical staff and library assistants. Our members are employed by the Atikokan Board of Education, the Lakehead District Roman Catholic Separate School Board, the Nipigon-Red Rock Board of Education and the Lake Superior Board of Education. Our membership works in the municipalities of Atikokan, Thunder Bay, Nipigon, Red Rock, Dorion, Schreiber, Terrace Bay, Marathon and Manitouwadge.

The main focus of my presentation today will be to talk about the enormous administrative difficulties that will be encountered should the Education Improvement Commission continue to insist on maintaining the current proposal for the amalgamation of school boards in northwestern Ontario.

I am sure you have heard time and time again about the geography of northwestern Ontario. We're talking about geography; we're talking about places the size of small European countries here. We're talking about vast distances. Just to give you some examples of the administrative difficulties that boards could encounter, think of a

situation that, if I have a custodian in Manitouwadge who has a grievance that needs to be dealt with and we've got to have a grievance meeting, the board has to send the personnel person from Thunder Bay to Manitouwadge — four and a half hours. The meeting may last a half an hour and then they've got to drive all the way back.

Just amalgamating school boards doesn't guarantee there are going to be any savings out of this amalgamation. The costs of administration and travel will soon take up any cost savings from administration, clearly. Even administrative costs — you've got plant and maintenance. You've got probably around 10 different communities in some of the boards. How would you expect one person in Thunder Bay to administer the plants over a distance of seven and a half hours one way, 14 hours both ways? You're still going to have to have administration in all those different municipalities. We don't see any savings as a result of the restructuring. The only result of the restructuring is going to be less democracy and less say that the people in these communities have over the education of their children. That's the only result from this.

I deal with school boards now. The Lake Superior Board of Education is spread over Marathon, Manitouwadge, Terrace Bay and Schreiber. I deal with them now and there are trustees in Manitouwadge who don't know the issues in Terrace Bay and Schreiber or Marathon. They don't know what's going on. In fact, we have difficulty making sure our collective agreement is administered the same between Manitouwadge and Terrace Bay and Schreiber, let alone a larger board. The chances of things being consistent in administrative policies are going to be an enormous task for individuals. You're going to need twice as much administration in Thunder Bay to do that.

Just quickly on some of my other concerns: Another concern is the Education Improvement Commission's recommendation that they facilitate discussion and make recommendations on how to promote the facilitating of outsourcing. Clearly, that is an issue with our membership. It's a concern. If you talk about outsourcing in those small communities, there are a lot of employees who work in those small communities who make decent wages and have decent working conditions. To outsource jobs or to close school board buildings and lay people off in those communities is going to have a devastating impact, not only on the employees themselves but on businesses in the community, on the tax base of the municipality. When they leave, their children who go to those schools leave, and that devastates the school system as well.

Just to summarize, I'd like to state we're in opposition and our membership is in opposition to the merger of the school boards as proposed by the education restructuring commission.

Mr Skarica: I can imagine, as has been indicated before, that there's some anxiety for outsourcing, but it's in fact happening in other areas of the province. We heard in Ottawa yesterday that the francophone board there was doing it and rather than having a devastating impact on the education system, it's had a very positive impact in that it's given them more money to hire teachers, cope with the cuts and that type of thing.

So I'm going to suggest to you it's not the outsourcing per se, it's how you do it. Since we're referring to David Cooke, he has this to say: "There's no way on earth that as co-chairs we would think we would be serving the province well by treating them," and that's the people affected by outsourcing, "with anything other than respect and justice as we go through these changes across the province."

So I just take issue with your fact that it will be devastating to the education of children, because in other parts of the province, rather than a devastating impact, it's had a positive impact.

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Ms Pan: I think, though, what you've done is you've cited one example, but in most instances in the real world what happens with outsourcing is that a public service is farmed out to a private business. The public service is not there to make a profit; the public service is there to provide a service. In this particular instance we're talking about education for our children. When we're talking about private businesses, their reason for existence is to make a profit, and therein lies the major difference.

Mr Gravelle: Following up on that point with Ms Pan, Mr Oram and Mr Skarica, the truth is there is not exactly overwhelming evidence that outsourcing works and is profitable. Also, when you're looking at the large board that's being envisioned, I think it's even more of a disaster. Certainly listening to the earlier presentations today by a number of groups, they talk about the fact that the relations that have developed with those particular non-teaching staff are really very important.

It seems to me, though, that there may be another concern. Even if there is outsourcing, is it not true — and either one of you can address it — that with this new board, if it goes into place, there could be a situation where employees are told they've got to go to work in various parts of that particular region? In other words, there wouldn't necessarily be any guarantee that they would stay in their location. Is that not true? Even part-time staff could be told that one week they're going to work in Geraldton and the next week they're going to work in — is that something else that would concern you?

Mr Oram: It is a concern to us. Right now in most of our collective agreements, we have job-posting language. People post on jobs in different cities, but that doesn't mean that given the restructuring, the employers may not come after those and decide to say, "You've got to go and work in Manitouwadge or Marathon tomorrow."

I certainly have some concern with the comments of Mr Skarica. If you look at outsourcing and you look at what private contractors are going to pay, they're going to pay people minimum wage. What kind of screening are they going to have for employees who work with children? We just saw an article in the paper the other day where they're setting up national programs for volunteers to screen out people with criminal convictions, to screen out paedophiles, to screen out those people. How are you going to ensure that these private contractors are going to have proper screening and disciplinary procedures over their employees? How are you going to ensure that? You're not going to have any say over that.

Ms Lankin: I think that's an important concern you've just raised. I've actually heard that from a number of parents in my constituency who are concerned that outsourcing without appropriate controls — and I question whether appropriate controls could even be put in place — puts their children in jeopardy.

The specific powers accorded to the commission suggest that the commission is required to “consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on how to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards.” It would seem to me that if the government doesn't have the case made that outsourcing is necessarily the best way and it has an open mind, the recommendation should be for the commission to “consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations” on whether or not, or on the advisability of, or in what circumstances to, or under what conditions to. If this bill proceeds as we see it, would you support a change in that direction that actually suggested, “Make the case before you simply ideologically, blindly go ahead and say you have to promote and facilitate outsourcing”?

Ms Pan: If anything, I would say they should just cut that particular paragraph right out, just get rid of it. I don't think there's a whole lot of documentary evidence that can be rounded up to support their case, so why bother? Why bother spending our time, our energy, our money? Let's do something productive. If we've only got a finite amount of money to spend, let's use it in a more productive way. Save the money they would have used to determine that — and they're not going to find the answers they want for that — into something more useful.

The Chair: Ms Pan and Mr Oram, thank you very much for being with us tonight. We appreciate the time you took.

Mr O'Toole: Madam Chair, on a point of order: I just want to make it very clear for the record that yesterday — the point the parliamentary assistant was making was that there was a board that completely and clearly submitted evidence of a reduction of \$5 million where they ended up hiring teachers. That point should be made. They did it not by laying people off but by attrition. That should be on the record clearly.

The Chair: Mr O'Toole, I think points have been made all through the session, but that's not a point of order.

LAKE SUPERIOR WOMEN TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

ATIKOKAN WOMEN TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION LAKEHEAD WOMEN TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

The Chair: Could I call upon the federation of women teachers, the Lake Superior, Atikokan and Lakehead women teachers' associations. Welcome to our committee.

Ms Patti Bailey: Good evening. I'm Patti Bailey from the Lake Superior Women Teachers' Association. I represent Marathon, Manitouwadge, Terrace Bay and Schreiber. To my left is Sharlene Smith from the Lake-

head Women Teachers' Association, and to my right is Pam Money from the Atikokan Women Teachers' Association.

I think the part about Bill 104 that scares me the most is losing what we currently have. Right now we have a fantastic, accessible board that's been highly efficient and very available to serve teachers, students and parents in our area. Bill 104 is supposed to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system, but we're concerned that it will cause so many changes that it will actually produce the opposite. We are concerned that the needs of students of small communities will be forgotten. We are concerned that when students, parents and teachers need to talk to somebody about the education system, nobody will be there. We are concerned about representation of each community that is going to be impacted by amalgamation. We have heard that we'll all be connected through computers and that communications will be better than ever.

As you have heard many times today, we still have analog lines, so cell phones and all the goodies that go along with that aren't available to us. The Internet is tough at best, impossible to get on during peak hours, so e-mail just isn't an option yet. It's really difficult to get on line. We would like to know that there's a real person who is easy to access, who will represent each community. We cannot ask parents to incur long-distance phone charges or “press 1 if you want to talk to this person” when they have concerns about their kids' education. If that is expected, we worry that a lot of people will be turned off by technology and their voices simply won't be heard.

Who will represent our communities? It's difficult enough presently for our trustees to travel between our four communities. Bill 104 would have boards quadruple in size so that they would take in huge geographical areas. You've seen the maps presented all day. How will trustees effectively represent communities? Where will the funding come from to allow them to travel to communities to find out the needs, not just a one-day visit but to spend time and find out what really matters to the people in those communities?

It's unfair to expect computers to represent people. There are many who simply are not computer users, who have no access to these types of communications. Do they just not count any more? What will happen to the quality of education when the stakeholders no longer have a voice? Who will provide funding for the changes to take place? Who will pay the mileage and expenses of trustees who have to travel great distances to represent communities? If teleconferencing is the answer, who will pay for that? Our communities lack the infrastructure to be represented without actual people. Who will pay for improving infrastructure? How can Bill 104 be effective with all these additional costs?

We are concerned about the collective bargaining process. We haven't heard anything on the government's response to the Paroian report yet. How will collective agreements be amalgamated in a fair manner? What will happen to seniority lists, class size, professional development, programs and staffing? There is a real fear that people will be bumped out of jobs. In our communities

we rely a lot on people buying homes and buying from local businesses. Teachers coming to Marathon aren't likely going to buy a house in Marathon if they know there's a chance next year that they could be bumped to Geraldton. The housing market just isn't there. What's going to happen to our kids when our communities become transient? What's going to happen to the economy of our communities? How do you build a sense of community and school culture when you never know who's going to be teaching in the school from year to year?

We are concerned that the Education Improvement Commission, an unelected body, supersedes the authority of an elected board. Bill 104 seems to say that reducing boards is effective, yet it adds another layer of bureaucracy with the Education Improvement Commission. The legislation has language which gives this body power above the law. How do we, as a democratic society, impact change with a governing body that has power above all?

Students are our number one concern. Unfortunately, there is precious little in Bill 104 that is going to improve things for the local kids. The students currently in our education system have faced program cuts, increased class sizes, loss of field trips, loss of interschool tournaments, loss of supplies, texts and things that are really important in their lives.

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Bill 104 seems like another way to save money. It is not about students or their everyday experiences in the education system; it is about saving money at their expense. Let's put Ontario students first and let their needs be what drives educational change. Bill 104 must be amended to reflect what is best for Ontario students. We cannot support legislation that disrupts the education of students, that negatively impacts on the quality of their education or that is unaccountable and ineffective.

Ms Pam Money: Good evening. My name is Pam Money. As president of the Atikokan Women Teachers' Association, I am here tonight to represent the elementary women teachers and the students of our community. I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about some of my concerns.

Bill 104 is cited as an act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards. There may very well be places where amalgamation of school boards does make sense. If such a move would save money and produce positive changes, and if this should be a local decision with input from all of the parties involved, then maybe amalgamation could be a viable option.

The present government, through Bill 104, forces the amalgamation of five existing school boards in north-western Ontario into one large board. Creating one board to cover a land mass greater than the entire country of France is highly ridiculous and outrageous. While the area may have fewer teachers and students than other regions, we do have a large geographical area. Our travelling time is extensive. Just to be here today for this brief five-minute presentation is a five-hour round trip for me.

Our weather conditions can be extreme, with cold temperatures, wind chill factors, and nothing but trees and rocks and rocks and trees along the way. Traffic is often sparse and travellers can find themselves stranded in the event of an accident, wildlife running out in front of your vehicle, or even a vehicle freezing up. The Ontario government has also hit northwestern Ontario hard with its latest cuts to the Ministry of Transportation, so roads aren't plowed with the same care and frequency with which they once were. For most of the winter, we travel on icy and snow-covered highways. Believe it or not, cell phones don't exist in our part of the province. I am concerned about my members, our trustees, the administration and myself who will have to spend more time travelling under these conditions if this amalgamation goes through.

You can assure me that technological advances will open lines of communication over vast areas, but I have to question the reliability of such technology when e-mail is still suffering severe growing pains in our area. Who will pay for this advanced technology? Who pays the startup costs? Who pays for the maintenance of the equipment? Personal contact and human interaction are still needed and can't be replaced by technology no matter how good it gets.

As you heard earlier today, Highway 11 is a major trans-Canada highway running east and west, as is Highway 17. What bridges these two highways? Two secondary roads, 622 and 502, which are mainly used by the pulp trucks. If you truly wish to save money and believe that amalgamation of school boards is one way to do that, would you please consider the amalgamation of boards along Highway 11, namely Fort Frances, Rainy River and Atikokan, and the separate amalgamation of the boards along Highway 17, namely Kenora, Dryden, and Red Lake. This is the pattern that social and family services seem to have followed, as well as the MNR.

Some of the most exciting things that have happened in education over the years have not come from the Ministry of Education but rather by individual local boards. In Atikokan, we are particularly proud of our band program and our outdoor education Outers program. Within the community, students, parents, teachers, trustees and administration have worked hard to develop educational initiatives which we believe to be unique. I know the same is true of the other boards in region 5. The job of the local school board is to make local policy consistent with provincial guidelines and local realities. They set clear expectations and guidelines for their schools.

At the present time, the school boards provide a direct line of communication between the school system and the general public.

The Chair: Excuse me, Ms Money. I just want to remind you there's only about four minutes left, and if you want to give any time to your other co-presenter, you may have to wrap up.

Ms Money: Thank you very much. Sharlene, go ahead.

Ms Sharlene Smith: Good evening. I'm Sharlene Smith from the Lakehead Women Teachers' Association. We too are concerned about the effects this government's cuts and other measures are having on the children and

women in this province. We know that the direction this government is taking will not be good for children, for education, for our community, for the economy or for democracy. We know that it does not make any good sense to make these unrealistic changes to education.

All of these proposed changes in Bill 104 are made for the sole purpose of cutting costs quickly to education. However, no one has addressed how the proposed changes, made in isolation, will fit into the broader vision of what we strongly believe our educational system should look like and how this should be accomplished in this province. LWTA strongly urges the EIC to slow its pace down and give serious consideration to all these issues. We urge this government to reconsider many of the decisions which have led it to the directions proposed in Bill 104.

We strongly believe that if school boards must be amalgamated, then the decisions should be made at the local level, with input from all the parties involved. We challenge this task force to recommend to this government that local communities be allowed to make their own decisions on the amalgamation of school boards. If communities wish to pursue this option, they should be required to do so in a way that honours the responsibility school boards have to their employees. We believe that the local community, and not the government, is the most appropriate level to make these decisions.

We have very serious concerns about having to respond to education reform on a piece-by-piece basis. What will the funding structure be like? How will the collective bargaining structures be changed? What will be put in place around standards, curriculum and other governance issues? The people of this province should be given the opportunity to respond to the whole package for education reform at one time, not forced into taking positions based on incomplete information. There must be more time given to reflect and consult on the implications of these changes.

The minister maintains that reducing the number of school boards by half will somehow free up enough money to improve our educational system, yet he has made no guarantees that the current funding level for education will be maintained after his restructuring of school boards.

We have a lot of concerns about Bill 104 and I will not address them, but I'd like to close by saying that Ontario's public schools are the expression of our society's commitment to provide members of the next generation with the opportunity to learn about our world, to develop to their full potential and to find the resources within themselves to shape their own future. These are the goals of education, and they've nurtured a school system in Ontario which we can be proud of. These goals have helped to fashion a society that is tolerant, caring, generous and prosperous.

These goals for education are now in jeopardy. If we aren't careful, we could leave our children with a very different kind of province, one where narrow self-interest comes at the expense of the collective good; a society of the privileged few and the many who live on the margin. We've already seen signs of this kind of Ontario existing today, and that's why we're concerned about Bill 104.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I regret we don't have more time for your presentations, but the text will form part of the official record. We appreciate the distances you've come to express your concerns.

Mr Gravelle: Madam Chair, may I just use this opportunity to put on the record a written presentation put forward by Rita Ubriaco? Ms Ubriaco was a three-term trustee with the Lakehead Board of Education. She wanted to appear but was not able to make it on the docket.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We'll arrange for it to be copied and distributed.

PETER ZANDSTRA

The Chair: Mr Peter Zandstra. Thank you very much for being here this evening. You have 10 minutes to make your presentation.

Mr Peter Zandstra: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on Bill 104 and some other education-related issues. My name is Peter Zandstra. I'm a retired dairy farmer. I do not represent an organization or a group, but my comments are made as a grandparent, parent, taxpayer and citizen.

Various test results indicate Ontario's poor showing in competitions. The *Globe and Mail*, November 22, 1996, and our local weekly, the *Post*, December 10, 1996, reported on a math and science test in which 41 countries and provinces competed. Ontario came in in the bottom half of all participants. In a report in *Maclean's*, in a competition among Canadian provinces, well below the Canadian average was Ontario's place. When looking at those facts, it comes as no surprise that there is a shortage of skilled workers in the high-tech industries; 15,000 jobs are open, and most of them will be filled by immigrants. Our schools have not equipped our students to fill these high-paying jobs, and our youth unemployment rate remains high.

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Funding is not the cause of our problems. Our education system is one of the highest-cost systems in the world. We are turning out an inferior product at high cost. We are failing our youth by not providing the education they deserve. We are also failing them by reckless borrowing, incurring debt on their behalf. This is totally unacceptable and a threat to our society.

The present school boards, the multitude of trustees and the high cost have not been able to prevent the gradual decline in the quality of our education system. A radical change is unavoidable, and so is cost cutting at the top.

Bill 104 is an important step in the right direction. The proposed district school boards will focus their attention on the enhancement of quality education, while the school councils will focus their attention on the day-to-day running of the school, together with the principals. Parents will thus be much better represented through school councils. Where distances play a role, contact between boards and councils can be maintained by teleconference. Besides being more cost-effective, it would also preclude the need for more boards, even in the north.

Another excellent proposal is found in section 333. An employee of a school board or a spouse of an employee is ineligible to function as a trustee. This prevents possible conflict of interest, and it also prevents the boards from being dominated by certain interest groups.

Bill 104 does not deal with financing or curriculum. Therefore, I will not comment on those subjects now. I will, however, express my disappointment at the fact that 80,000 students in the private schools have been ignored in Bill 104 and in all background information.

We are all aware of the profound changes in our education system in the last 35 years. The Christian Roman Catholic system is intact, but the Christian public system has evolved into a public system to reflect the predominantly multicultural, secular society. Christianity has been banished from the public schools. The public schools are now considered "the single most important instrument for inculcating citizenship" and shared moral values in our multicultural society. I quote from Mr Valpy in the *Globe and Mail*, November 22, 1996.

This is totally unacceptable to Christian parents who want their own moral and religious values taught to their children. They do not need those moral and religious values contradicted in the public schools their children are obliged to attend. Those parents are now maintaining their own schools, which the Ontario government has so far refused to finance.

We may take another look at Alberta. That province has provided partial funding for private schools for over 25 years. It also scores at the top or near the top of all tests. It seems to have one of the lower-cost systems, where the dollar funds the student, not the system.

Except for these concerns, I believe Bill 104 is an excellent piece of legislation and should be passed and implemented without delay.

I conclude with a statement from the magazine *Country Guide*: "Deficiencies in public housing and local bus service are survivable. But in a competitive and technologic based global economy, deficiencies in the education system are not."

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Zandstra. We have 45 seconds per caucus.

Mr Duncan: Thank you for your presentation. Data have been produced earlier today and in earlier hearings from a variety of sources that say in fact that on a per student basis Ontario is one of the lowest jurisdictions in terms of expenditures, and second, in terms of pupil-teacher ratios we have one of the highest.

A number of findings have said quite conclusively that a lot of the significant achievement in education happens in the home and not in the school itself. Shouldn't our objective be (1) to try to improve our per pupil funding, (2) improve the teacher-pupil ratio and (3) encourage parents to get more involved not just through student councils but by simple things like reading for an hour before bed, which has been shown unequivocally to raise test scores?

Given what you've mentioned about Christian schools and the values in Christian schools that are taught, wouldn't you agree that we ought to put a higher priority on our kids and see to it that Ontario, instead of being 46th in North America, should be in the top 10 in terms of per pupil funding? Would you agree?

Mr Zandstra: Yes. The problem is that a school should reflect the values of the home, and that is quite often not done. The values taught in the home should be reflected in the school. The same values should be taught in the school; if not, the child might get all mixed up if he gets it from two sides.

Ms Lankin: I understand the points you're making with respect to Christian schools. I'm going to set that aside for a moment. You spoke about your agreement with the proposal that spouses of teachers, for example, not be allowed to run for boards of trustees. You said you thought there was a conflict of interest and that special interest groups could take over, and yet that's an open, elected process.

You're supporting putting more powers down into parent councils at the schools. Some of what I've heard from parent council representatives who have come forward is that they don't want those extra powers, but they're also concerned about takeovers by special interest groups in a non-accountable forum. Isn't that open to either perhaps something you would agree with, a group which represented your values taking over, or a group of parents which didn't represent your values taking over? I'm a little worried about your belief that this will be more accountable than an actual elected structure.

Mr Zandstra: I believe that groups of parents with similar moral values and ideology should be able to form their own schools and hire their own teachers so those schools can reflect the values taught in the home.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr Zandstra, for bringing to our attention some data that I didn't recognize when I read it back in December and November of 1996, Ontario students' placement in math and science, and you've brought that to our attention. What better measurement of how the system is working?

In your report, you also mentioned that we have to fill 15,000 high-tech jobs from immigration because our system cannot provide the students. That again is another measurement or testimony as to how the system is working. It's not a case of how much money the system seems to need and it's not teachers; it's the case that perhaps we need to correct the system.

The final statement that I just want you to reinforce for me is, "We are failing our youth by not providing the education" they need and deserve. You said it so emphatically. I'd like to stay away from the moral stuff and the cost and just say that we have to produce the highest-quality students and educational system we can for all students, regardless of their systems, whether they're in northern Ontario, southern Ontario, wherever. Is Bill 104 able to get us to the first step?

Mr Zandstra: I believe it involves more parents through school councils. I think it's a great improvement over the other system. We have a multitude of trustees, but still they are not as approachable as the parents of children who go to a certain school. Personally, I've been involved with the Thunder Bay Christian School, which is a small school. We have our own board, all volunteers; nobody gets paid. We do not have any problems getting qualified people to run for the boards even though they have to sacrifice their time, their mileage and everything.

The Chair: Mr Zandstra, thank you very much for staying so late and sharing your views with us. Good evening.

2030

RED LAKE JOINT ANTIRACIST
AND ETHNOCULTURAL EQUITY COMMITTEE
NATIVE EDUCATION CIRCLE

The Chair: I call on the Joint Antiracist and Ethnocultural Equity Committee, Andrea Winik and Louis Simard. Thank you very much for coming this evening. We're looking forward to your presentation.

Ms Andrea Winik: By this time of night, you folks know where Red Lake is now. Good evening. I'm Andrea Winik. I was born and raised in the Philippines and I now live in Red Lake. I am a very concerned citizen and have been a school teacher for the past 31 years. I will be retiring this June.

Interjection.

Ms Winik: I was just a little baby then, yes. As an educator, I firmly believe we have the responsibility to give the best education to our students. There is an African saying, "It takes a whole village to raise a child," and that's all of us.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of the Red Lake Joint Antiracist and Ethnocultural Equity Committee. I will be sharing this time with Mr Louis Simard, co-chair of the Native Education Circle and also a member of our committee.

I am here this evening to present some history and background of our committee work and its importance as to why this committee must continue to exist. The controversial issue of racism is rampant. It has been in the world since time immemorial. It has caused all kinds of unnecessary tragedies and will continue to do so if we do not face the real issues and come up with some honest-to-goodness, viable solutions for our future generation.

Racism exists everywhere and of course Red Lake is no exception. The regional multicultural youth council conducted a region-wide survey involving 1,000 students from all the high schools of northwestern Ontario. The study revealed that 60% indicated that racism was a problem in their respective schools and they wanted something done about it. When asked how racism exists, the students gave examples ranging from name-calling, jokes, teasing, taunting, swearing and graffiti to physical assaults such as spitting, fights, and vandalism to property such as books, lockers and clothes.

Also, a local survey was completed regarding racism in the Red Lake area. This study was done through the Red Lake Indian Friendship Centre. Its overwhelming results concluded that racism is a problem here. As a result of the survey, the joint committee was formed and got involved with the Ontario Joint Race Relations Strategy Committee. Systemic discrimination was a great concern, particularly in the Red Lake area. This committee suggested strategies on how we can prevent discrimination in our area. This committee was dissolved when the funding ran out.

Every board has to be dealing with this issue to improve our quality of life in each community. Are they really doing things? In fact, we are. This board has numerous accomplishments. I am extremely proud to say that our board's positive and continued efforts to improve race relations in our community are quite commendable. For the past few years, we have been proactive and sensitive to the needs of our community and, most important, our children. Our committee's priority is to continue to develop an awareness and sensitivity in the business and service community of cultural issues in relation to providing services to first nation clients as well as other ethnic groups in our society. We feel this is vital. It benefits everyone. Our society will have to work together. We recognize this.

Active initiatives must be present in the school systems to help children in different, diverse cultural groups work together. The world has changed. We recognize that, and we are taking specific initiatives in our own classrooms to address this issue.

Every community and every board deals with this at different levels and therefore has different levels of success. The Red Lake Board of Education and St John's Roman Catholic separate school have a joint anti-racist and ethnocultural policy. This partnership has created an extraordinary vision for our school systems. The implementation plan and time lines are in place as well.

To continue the board's proactive approach to positive race relations, a variety of initiatives have been implemented and some are ongoing. Native language programs for both the elementary and secondary panels are now implemented in our school system. More activities and workshops are being developed. The Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario has sponsored Golden Learning Centre as one of the 12 schools in Ontario to participate in their pilot project, *Untie the Knots of Prejudices*. It is a literature-based program. These curriculum units provide anti-racist and anti-bias education strategies based on books teachers can use for each month of the year.

Through the cooperative efforts of the township of Ear Falls, the Red Lake Board of Education and the Wabauskang First Nation, the native transition school, now called Northern Eagle High School, was established. The Ear Falls business community development presented a workshop dealing with native awareness in Ear Falls for business and/or service people as well as for the general public.

Why are we concerned about district 5 amalgamation? The proposed amalgamation worries our committee. What impact will it have on this committee? Will the new board have this as a priority? How will this committee operate? Who will be the people responsible and involved? Will they be senior staff or trustees? Are we going to continue to exist? Will this new board have a strong commitment? Will there be a guarantee that this committee and its goals will continue?

If it dies, folks, it will definitely have a negative impact on everything we have accomplished, our future plans, their challenges and the growing belief that a good contemporary education is in essence a global education; that is, an education which concentrates on helping

students understand connections and interdependence, develop an awareness of the planetary condition and be well prepared to act as effective, responsible citizens in a complex world.

What solutions can be most effective? The best, in my opinion — this is my opinion — is to leave the Red Lake Board of Education alone. But the reality is that we are less than 10% of the population of the proposed amalgamated board, district 5. Therefore, on behalf of our committee, we are in favour of a smaller board model rather than a mega-board. We are quite serious regarding the issue of racism and its impact in our community. We are the only board of education that has accessed funding from the Canadian heritage fund to promote and educate our citizens.

Our board continues to be proactive. Hopefully, this hearing will listen to our plea to make sure this committee continues to work within the framework of a smaller board; it could be Red Lake-Dryden or Red Lake-Dryden-Kenora. This is a big worry for our committee.

The Chair: Excuse me, Ms Winik; you have five minutes left.

Ms Winik: I will say it again. I hope you will all see the long-term benefit of working together. We are committed to being a part of the major decision-makers. We are very concerned that our voice as equal partners will be no more.

Just remember, our children's education is everyone's priority, and you, as members of the committee, must take this plea with great consideration. These children's education will depend upon us now. How we deliver will definitely impact upon their future. Let's not fail them now.

2040

Mr Louis Simard: I'd like to thank the anti-racist committee for allowing me to speak. I'm not supposed to be here. Bonjour, good evening, ladies and gentlemen. As I have a short time to speak, I can't read from this. I suspect you all have a copy. I hope you look at it and think about it seriously.

I am Louis Simard. I am here in my role as co-chair of the Native Education Circle. I am speaking on behalf of the first nation students, parents and community members of our local and remote northern communities that we work with.

I have great difficulty with the idea of a larger school board. I'm not reading from the paper. I'm going to talk from the heart. I think we have to look at the remoteness of our communities in the north. The Red Lake school board in particular was very instrumental in helping us build a relationship with those first nations communities in the north so we could have a school in Ear Falls. We worked diligently and hard in building that relationship with the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council, to build and work with them and to help them in the education process as equal partners in education.

It is difficult for me to understand why there aren't any first nations people here speaking tonight. It saddens me deeply to realize that I'm the only person here to speak in the name of first nations people. I realize we are funded through the federal government, but I still think

in a lot of ways we work towards building a relationship and working with the province in education.

It's important, because I've seen too many failures, too many sad situations of suicide, unemployment and lack of education for first nations students in this country. It's a sad situation. I work as native employment coordinator in the north at one of the bigger mining companies, and I've seen it. I don't want that for our youth.

There's got to be a way in which we can work with mainstream society to build a better education system for our students. We've got to have that. I'd like to see the first nations students walk alongside the multicultural country we live in, which we call Canada, and be proud of who they are as first nations people. It is time they were recognized as part of the Canada we call our country. It's a sad state of affairs when I'm the only person here who can speak in the name of those first nations people.

I'm not an educated man. I only got my diploma this year; at 55 years old, I finally got my grade 12 diploma. I was laid off after 22 years of working for a particular mining company. I know how difficult it is out there for our youth. I know how difficult it is out there not just for the native youth but for all youth in our country. We have to look at building that partnership that will see all students of all different nationalities have an equal opportunity for an education.

I really think that in the whole process a larger board will not serve us. It won't serve our needs. We need trustees with these particular boards. Because of the vastness of the north and the sparsely populated communities out there — we're talking about 10,000 Ojibway and maybe another 6,000 or 7,000 Cree. They're isolated, they're poor, they're unemployed. A lot of them just can go to grade 8 and they don't have the opportunity to be successful in big urban centres.

That's one reason we adopted the Northern Eagle education program, to help them find the way to a better education, a better life and success in their young lives so they wouldn't be out there committing suicide or walking the streets of the big cities, not knowing where they live or where they come from.

We want to build a community of communities. We want to be able to be a partner in this beautiful country we call Canada. I'm proud to be a Canadian, I'm proud to be a native Canadian, but above all, I'm proud to have served my country overseas and to have been a proud Canadian ambassador over there. I've seen the devastation and what can happen in wars and ethnic conflicts. I don't want that for my country. I love this country.

I'm here representing those 54 students at Northern Eagle High School. I really thank you for your time. I was very disappointed that the committee sought not to recognize me as co-chair of the Native Education Circle, in which we represent many of our northern communities, students and those people in our community who are first nations. I thank you. Meegwetich.

The Chair: Ms Winik and Mr Simard, I truly regret we don't have more time. We're constrained by the time that we have been given by the government to do this task. You should know that we've had approximately 1,400 requests to appear. We'll be able to accommodate

a very small number. Mr Simard, in particular, I think I speak for the committee when I say that we're very pleased to have you here with us today. Meegwetch.

Mr Simard: I would like to give the committee this video. It's about our school. I hope you'll take the time to look at it; it's 18 minutes. It will tell you a lot about what we're doing in the Red Lake area. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Meegwetch. Good evening.

Mr Gravelle: Madam Chair, may I put another presentation into the record?

The Chair: You may indeed.

Mr Gravelle: Mrs Charlotte Matson wanted to appear, but has a written presentation, which I will present to the clerk.

The Chair: Thank you. We will arrange for copying and distribution.

KENORA BOARD OF EDUCATION PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Chair: I call the parent advisory council to the Kenora Board of Education; Cindy Christensen. Welcome, Mrs Christensen. You are the last and possibly the best, certainly not the least. We're delighted to have you here with us. You have 15 minutes for your presentation.

Mrs Cindy Christensen: Thank you. Good evening. My name is Cindy Christensen. I'm here representing the parents of Kenora. Four years ago I entered the classroom of my first child going to kindergarten very nervously, thinking I wouldn't see her very much any more. At that point the teacher invited me to come in and do some volunteer work in her classroom; I was just overjoyed and so relieved that this would happen. In my wildest dreams, I never thought four years later I would be sitting at a panel like this representing the parents with whom I work on almost a daily basis in Kenora. I feel very privileged and honoured to be able to be here to address you tonight.

I'd also like to acknowledge the Kenora Board of Education, which works in partnership with their parents. They paid my way today. There wasn't an opportunity to carpool with anybody. They got me a flight. Since I was on at the end, I can't catch a flight home tonight, and they've got me a hotel room. This is a great generosity to me and to the parents I represent.

If I could have had my way tonight, I would have liked to bring all the parents whom I work with to be here. We would really have loved to see some type of teleconferencing so they could all be here participating.

2050 Personally, I have three small children. With the support of family, neighbours and relatives, who were very anxious and very happy to take care of them in my absence — those people I also represent because they're supporting me in this role.

As I've explained to you, I haven't had the financial costs because of the generosity of the Kenora Board of Education. But I do incur another cost that all parent volunteers incur, and that is that even though we may

have time, we sacrifice time in which we could be doing other things or being with our children. An example of this today is that I am an at-home mom, so I bring my kids home at lunch. I missed lunch with them, I missed piano lessons, I missed skating lessons. I work in a Sparks unit as an adviser there — I missed that — and I missed putting them to bed and reading to them, which I do religiously every evening. The cost to me is tremendous to be here, but as I was offered the opportunity to come yesterday, I talked with my family, even the two-year-old, to tell her that I needed to go. The consensus with my young family was that I needed to go because it was in the best interests of all children.

With that, I would like to tell you that it is with great pleasure and gratitude that I'm here to represent the parents of Kenora. This is our statement to you this evening.

We are here today on behalf of the parent advisory council to the Kenora Board of Education. Each of the schools within the Kenora board's jurisdiction has an active school council. The parent advisory council is comprised of a parent representative from each school council and a senior board administrator, two trustees, one of whom co-chairs the council with a parent representative, who at this time is me. We find this council to be very effective and satisfying in allowing us to participate in board activities. There is a great fear personally that this council will not be able to continue to operate in this same effective, satisfying way if we don't have access to these people who are such great resources to us on a continuous basis.

While we thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, we remind you that our appearance is the result of notification by our board that we had the opportunity to apply rather than direct notification by your committee to apply. While the Ministry of Education and Training stresses the importance of school councils and parental involvement in theory, they largely ignore the input of school councils and parents in fact.

The ministry acknowledgment of our request to appear before you stated that the parent advisory council will be notified "only if the committee wishes to schedule you for an appointment to appear before it." This dismissive attitude is an insult to all parent volunteers who give of their own time for better education within their communities. If parental input is not important to the Ministry of Education and Training, end the charade so that our volunteer time can be spent where we feel it will be more valued.

The very manner in which Bill 104, with its deadlines, was introduced and in which the hastily and poorly arranged consultative hearings came to be represents our worst fears: Education in Ontario is becoming centralized and bureaucratic and will ignore the unique needs of each of its constituent parts.

Bill 104, with the amalgamation of the Kenora, Dryden, Red Lake, Fort Frances-Rainy River and Atikokan boards, will create the most geographically diverse board in the province. In fact, it spans two time zones. Despite this, the Ministry of Education and Training would not extend the courtesy of holding a

consultative meeting anywhere within the boundaries of the proposed board. If the ministry finds it too difficult to visit our vast geographical area, how can you expect an amalgamated school board to be practical over such distances?

A large school board is going to affect access by parents to senior administrators. Communication and information between the board and concerned parents will be less effective and accessible. With the creation of the proposed district school board 5, a long-distance call will be inevitable. It is said that technology may facilitate this; however, during a recent teleconference on school councils, parts of the presentation were missed because of technical difficulties with the telecommunication system.

To be able to participate in this new system will require time, money and reliable transportation. The question is, will the opportunity be available to a single parent on a limited income who has the motivation to participate at this level out of interest for her children's education? We think not.

We have learned that Ms Annamarie Castrilli, Chair of the standing committee on social development, will visit Kenora on March 20, 1997. While we thank Ms Castrilli for her visit, we again point out that it is hastily arranged, allowing interested parties little time to prepare proper presentations. Further, her visit to Kenora may be more as a courtesy to our local MPP than an attempt to extend the hearings into our geographical area.

We are not here today to endorse the status quo. Change is inevitable, and the parent advisory council endorses the principle of directing all available resources into the classroom. However, we firmly believe that grass-roots parental involvement levers these resources. Strong partnerships between parents, teachers, administrators, support staff and locally accountable, democratically elected trustees ensures that our children benefit.

Strong community partnerships should be encouraged. The proposed amalgamation of school boards suggested in Bill 104 weakens this concept. How can these partnerships be accommodated within such a vast and varied region? In fact, it creates an unelected, centralized bureaucracy with sweeping powers and little accountability to us, the parents, and our children. The proposed bill and the consultative hearings have done nothing to exhibit an understanding of the unique concerns of the geography of northwestern Ontario.

We strongly urge that the proposed legislation be re-examined and amended with due consideration given to the following recommendations:

(1) Geographical considerations make the proposed district school board 5 impractical. Required travel could be up to six hours one way, with most of the travel on

secondary highways. Travel considerations and the required time away from work and family will discourage many capable trustees from coming forward and motivated parents from participating at board level activities.

Recommendation: That the proposal made in the final report of the Ontario School Board Reduction Task Force be followed, creating three school boards west of Thunder Bay: (1) Kenora, (2) Red Lake and Dryden and (3) Atikokan and Fort Frances-Rainy River.

(2) Many presentations to this committee have been from school councils, home and school associations and other parent groups. It is clear that parental involvement is one of the greatest resources our educational system has, and it is essentially provided free. Our present school councils are developing and feeling more confident in their advisory role. It has been made clear by the members of the school councils that they are not interested in being involved in school governance.

Recommendation: Provide an infrastructure that continues to encourage parental involvement and community partnerships and maintains accountability for the operation of local schools with our locally elected trustees.

(3) We as parents believe that those closest to the home know best its needs.

Recommendation: Reconsider the centralization of powers to an unelected body, the EIC, that may alienate those who are closest and most knowledgeable of our needs.

(4) For whatever reason, through incompetence or by design, the government appears to be paying lip-service to the consultative process. Notification was inadequate, confirmation late and location an insult. Scheduling the Kenora Board of Education and the parent advisory council six hours apart even precluded travelling the 600-mile round trip together. You have shown great disrespect for your most valuable resource, your volunteers.

Recommendation: Prove our perception wrong. Give legitimate consideration to our recommendations and keep us fully informed. Recognize that we are closer to the home and to the classroom than you are.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs Christensen, for your presentation. I appreciate that you've come a very long way to make it, and on behalf of the committee let me thank you for that.

To deal with some housekeeping matters with the committee, you'll be delighted to know that the shuttle bus will pick you up at 5:45 sharp tomorrow morning. There are two different flights, one at 6:25 and one at 6:45. The shuttle bus will be here at 5:45 am.

We are adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow in Sudbury.

The committee adjourned at 2101.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Chair / Président: Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview L)

Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville L)

| | |
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| Mrs Marion | Boyd (London Centre / -Centre ND) |
| Mr Jack | Carroll (Chatham-Kent PC) |
| Ms Annamarie | Castrilli (Downsview L) |
| Mr Dwight | Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville L) |
| Mr Tom | Froese (St Catharines-Brock PC) |
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| Mrs Julia | Munro (Durham-York PC) |
| Mr Trevor | Pettit (Hamilton Mountain PC) |
| Mr Peter L. | Preston (Brant-Haldimand PC) |
| Mr Bruce | Smith (Middlesex PC) |
| Mr Bud | Wildman (Algoma ND) |

Substitutions present / Membres remplaçants présents:

| | |
|------------|--------------------------------------|
| Mr Ted | Arnott (Wellington PC) |
| Mr Marcel | Beaubien (Lambton PC) |
| Ms Frances | Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine ND) |
| Mr John | O'Toole (Durham East / -Est PC) |
| Mr Toni | Skarica (Wentworth North / -Nord PC) |

Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes:

| | |
|------------|--------------------------|
| Mr Michael | Gravelle (Port Arthur L) |
| Mr Howard | Hampton (Rainy River ND) |
| Mr Frank | Miclash (Kenora L) |

Clerk / Greffière: Ms Tonia Grannum

Staff / Personnel: Mr Ted Glenn, research officer, Legislative Research Service

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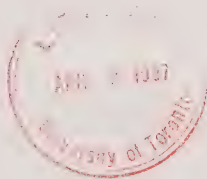
Mercredi 19 mars 1997

**Standing committee on
social development**

**Comité permanent des
affaires sociales**

Fewer School
Boards Act, 1997

Loi de 1997 réduisant
le nombre de conseils scolaires



Chair: Annamarie Castrilli
Clerk: Tonia Grannum

Présidente : Annamarie Castrilli
Greffière : Tonia Grannum

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Wednesday 19 March 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES
AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Mercredi 19 mars 1997

The committee met at 1003 in the Ambassador Motor Hotel, Sudbury.

FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 RÉDUISANT
LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Consideration of Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système, en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

The Chair (Ms Annamarie Castrilli): Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to our committee. Bonjour à tout le monde. This is our sixth day of hearings, the second in the north, and we're delighted to be here and to have you all with us. We'll begin promptly with the Manitoulin Board of Education.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Just before the Manitoulin Board of Education, Madam Chair, I have a motion that I'd like to introduce for the committee's perusal at this time; I'd like to move it at this time.

The Chair: Would you like to read it?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): Could we have printed copies of this?

The Chair: Yes, it's being distributed right now.

Mr Bartolucci: The motion is as follows:

Whereas parents and teachers are growing concerned over class sizes in our schools; and

Whereas it is deemed important by all Ontarians to protect the quality of education; and

Whereas we, as responsible legislators, believe the quality of education is negatively impacted by excessively large class sizes; and

Whereas the children of our schools require our support as legislators;

Be it resolved that the standing committee on social development move that the private member's Bill 110 entitled the Smaller Class Sizes Act be appended to Bill 104.

The Chair: Did you want to speak to the motion?

Mr Bartolucci: I think the motion is self-explanatory, but I sat in on several hearings in Toronto and certainly I was talking to my colleagues and the member of the third party, and he too and they mentioned that parents all over are concerned about the growing class sizes.

We debated this motion in the Legislature during private members' hour and we had three-party support to refer it to the social development committee. Nothing's happened. I'm concerned, as parents are concerned, as members of the opposition are concerned, and as I'm sure those people on the government side who supported the resolution are concerned, that it's going to die. We don't want it to die because we believe it is an integral part of any type of educational reform, the protection of children in the classroom so that they can be taught in reasonable numbers as opposed to numbers that are so large that meaningful education is not possible.

That was the intent of the bill, and the intent of this motion is certainly that, in order to get some debate on this, if we append it to Bill 104 then it becomes part of the discussion that we feel is essential.

The Chair: Any further debate?

Mr O'Toole: Yes, Madam Chair. I completely understand what Mr Bartolucci is debating here, and he knows that all three parties supported this in his private member's session. It did carry. My contention is, though, that Bill 104 is not the appropriate place because it only deals with the governance model; it doesn't deal with curriculum or indeed the educational model. I think the funding model is the appropriate place. Class size will determine what the expenditure per child is. A lot to do with it is class size. So I think it's a bit premature. I understand your concern. That's my view on it.

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I just have a couple of questions. Is this, in your opinion, Madam Chair, in order?

The Chair: He certainly is entitled to bring a motion. The motion can be defeated or passed.

Mr Arnott: But would it be in order for a private member's bill to be added to an existing government bill that is before a standing committee?

The Chair: There's a motion on the floor. We have to deal with the motion. So I ask you to stick to the debate and then you can vote accordingly as to whether we will deal with it or not.

Mr Arnott: I'm not really satisfied with that answer because my suspicion is that it would not be in order for a private member's bill to be simply added to a government bill at committee. I could be wrong, but that's my suspicion.

The Chair: The committee could recommend amendments if it so chose. This motion is in the nature of an

amendment. Therefore Mr Bartolucci is free to bring it to the committee. We can discuss the substance of the motion and vote accordingly.

Mr Arnott: Okay. One question. When was this bill referred to this committee? What was the date?

The Chair: Does the researcher have that information?

Mr Arnott: It's on the committee's agenda but —

The Chair: It is on the committee's agenda. Yes, it is.

Mr Arnott: The committee has not dealt with this bill in any way —

The Chair: We don't have the details yet as to when hearings will take place with respect to the bill or anything, but it has been referred to this committee, yes.

Mr Arnott: I'd like to say to Mr Bartolucci, I supported your bill at second reading in the House and also supported that it be sent to this committee, but I guess I have concerns about the process we're following here. We've only had one hour's debate on that bill in the House, and I certainly have some reservations about moving ahead without more extensive public hearings on that aspect of the bill, because we're fairly late in the public hearings process. In most of the presentations that we've heard to date — nobody's been aware to date that this was coming, I don't think. Certainly I supported the concept of some minimum guidelines for class size, but I'm not sure I support exactly the letter of what you are suggesting and I think we need more public discussion on it, quite frankly.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I'm a little confused about the position taken by Mr O'Toole and Mr Arnott on behalf of the government. If the position that has just been put forward by Mr Arnott is that we really need more time, more public hearings, to deal with this motion, which is supported by all three parties and has been supported at second reading, the proposal, I find it rather strange that on a major bill like 104, which affects every board in Ontario and every student in Ontario, the government has chosen to limit debate and to limit public hearings.

1010

I remind members that during the debate on second reading, the opposition did not prolong discussion of Bill 104. There were no delaying tactics, no deleterious motions. As a matter of fact, we had three days of debate at second reading and then the government chose to bring in a time allocation motion which limited the hearings to four days in Toronto and six days outside of Toronto, not nearly enough for all of the people who are interested in participating in discussion on Bill 104 to be able to put forward their views. Then the government included in its time allocation motion only one day for clause-by-clause debate for amendments to this legislation and only one hour for committee of the whole discussion in the Legislature before it could be passed at third reading in only one day.

So if Mr Arnott is really serious that we need to have further debate on Mr Bartolucci's motion, which everybody supports —

Mr Arnott: In principle.

Mr Wildman: In principle — then why on earth did he and his colleagues support the motion put forward by the government House leader to curtail debate on 104,

about which there is tremendous controversy, and that very few people we've heard from agree with?

The Chair: Mr Wildman, I appreciate that is an issue that members of the committee feel very strongly about, but I wonder if you could stick to the substance of this motion.

Mr Wildman: That's why I said I was confused, Chair, because I would think that since all of us on this committee, or certainly all three parties in the Legislature, supported Mr Bartolucci's bill when it came before the House at second reading, supported it in principle, we would be in support of moving it forward. Since Bill 104 deals with education, according to the government, and the quality of education, it would make sense to have it appended.

I suspect that Bill 104 is not really about education, that Bill 104 is about control and money and getting money out of the system, and that's why the government members don't want to deal with education and Mr Bartolucci's motion when they're dealing with 104, because 104 really isn't about education; it's about ending local accountability, local democracy. It's not about improving education. There isn't one thing in Bill 104 that improves education for students, so maybe we should be putting Mr Bartolucci's motion forward because it would indeed do something for education for students in the province.

The Chair: Mr Wildman, thank you. I'd like us to stick to the substance of this motion. We will deal with 104 throughout the course of the day.

Mr Wildman: I am. I'm dealing exactly with the substance of the motion.

The Chair: I've been advised by the clerk that Mr Bartolucci is in fact not an official member of the committee, he's not been subbed in for anyone, so I require someone to move the motion.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I'll move it.

Mr Bartolucci: I have been subbed in. The duly authorized form was signed several weeks ago.

Interjection.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): It's all right; Dwight's moved the motion.

The Chair: Thank you very much; I appreciate that. Mr Duncan, as it happens, it's your turn.

Mr Duncan: I think the reason Mr Bartolucci has first of all brought the original bill forward in the Legislature and now wants it brought forward is so that it's not just passed off and allowed to die on the order paper, so that we force the government to not just pay lip-service to the concept of improved pupil-teacher ratios but that they do something about it. I think this resolution that Mr Bartolucci has brought forward today and his bill allow us the opportunity as individual legislators to debate a bill that will substantially improve education in the province of Ontario. If the government votes against this particular motion, it would signal to me that they are not seriously intent on debating Bill 110 and getting it to hearings at social development. We will challenge the government through other ways to get that bill into committee as quickly as possible.

The Chair: In fairness to all the people who have come here to present, I have two more speakers on the

list and then I will call it at that. Mrs McLeod and then Mr Jordan.

Mrs McLeod: I'll be fairly brief because I know from all of our previous committee hearings that there's considerable pressure on our day to give everybody a fair hearing. But I do think this is an important beginning to the day because it touches on something which has been a consistent theme of virtually everybody who has presented at the committee, and that's the frustration that Bill 104 is really only one piece of a puzzle. People are extremely concerned to see these kinds of structural changes being made in education when the other pieces of the puzzle are not known, the government's agenda specifically in terms of funding of education and how the proposed equity that is to be provided is actually going to be achieved in real-dollar terms.

We have tried in every way possible to get that kind of information directly from the ministry. We've put questions on the record for the committee, we've asked for written responses, we've had a briefing. We simply cannot get information.

We've also been told as of yesterday that the EIC, which is moving ahead to make recommendations even before this legislation is passed, might well be amenable to suggestions from the committee, at least in the area of board boundaries. I think if that's the case, they might also be amenable to recommendations from the committee in relationship to class size, which is a fundamental part of the funding formula. I do believe it is perfectly appropriate for us, if the wording of the resolution was not seen to be appropriate to simply amend the act, to actually provide direction in the act on class sizes so that that can be a basis for looking at the funding formulas.

We know that this can't be delayed because the funding formulas are being developed as we speak. One thing the ministry has made absolutely clear in their briefings to us is that they are going ahead on the assumption that the ministry is to take over 100% funding and that they are preparing the funding formulas now. If we wait and debate this whole issue again, something which has had support from all three parties, then our recommendations on class size will be too late to influence that funding formula.

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): I just wanted to point out that we invited the public here for 10 o'clock for public hearings. This part of the discussion is not part as scheduled here. These people have a busy schedule ahead of them for the day. They planned to be here for 10 o'clock —

The Chair: Mr Jordan, amendments are always in order. I'd like us to move on to give the public a chance to have their say as well, so perhaps you could make your point and we could move on.

Mr Jordan: Yes. It is a Liberal motion and they have the responsibility to bring it forward at the proper time, after the hearings here on Bill 104.

Mr Wildman: We only have one day, according to the time allocation motion —

The Chair: Is there anything else? That's your point?

Mr Jordan: I'm concerned about keeping the people who are scheduled waiting.

The Chair: I will put the motion to a vote. All in favour? Opposed? The motion is defeated.

Mr Duncan: Madam Chair, I would move that this committee meet in April for two weeks to consider Bill 110, Mr Bartolucci's private member's bill.

The Chair: Any discussion on that motion?

Mr Arnott: Could we have copies of that motion?

The Chair: Yes. Mr Bartolucci.

Mr Bartolucci: I will be brief. The intent of this motion is to ensure protection for children in the classroom, for students in the classroom. I don't want this motion to die; I don't want this bill to die. If we're not going to append it to 104, then obviously I am in support of having public hearings, and the two weeks in April would suit my schedule just fine. More importantly, it would suit the people of Ontario just fine.

You're going to hear today from parents, from educators, their concerns about growing class sizes. This has to be addressed. There is some urgency attached to it because the government is going ahead with its funding formula. This is important to the government's funding formula, as our education critic said. So I would be most supportive of that resolution.

The Chair: Further debate?

Mr Wildman: I would support the proposal, particularly in view of Mr Jordan's concern about the lack of time. I'm sure the government members would accommodate the possibility of dealing with this bill in April. Considering the fact that the government has said that the funding formula will be published in April, this discussion would be right in line with how much money is available for education in the classroom and for ensuring that there are proper resources made available to students. So I think it would make sense.

Frankly, it would make a lot more sense to have the funding formula available before Bill 104 is dealt with, but since the government is putting the cart before the horse, at least we can have some discussion of class sizes in relation to the funding formula in April.

1020

The Chair: In the interest of making sure we move on and hear the public, Mr Arnott, you will be the last speaker on this motion.

Mr Arnott: I haven't got a copy of the motion yet.

Mr Duncan: It's being copied.

The Chair: It's being copied. Perhaps you could repeat it for us, Mr Duncan.

Mr Duncan: The members of your committee indicated that you were more than willing to have public hearings. This committee is not meeting, has nothing on its agenda for the month of April. I think it's quite appropriate then that we consider it, in that it's been referred to us from the Legislature and it simply calls upon us to do that, to fulfil our obligations as members of provincial Parliament and members of the committee.

The Chair: Could you give us the motion, Mr Duncan.

Mr Duncan: That this committee meet for two weeks in the month of April 1997 to conduct public hearings on private member's Bill 110.

Mr Arnott: I believe I said in my initial comments that I felt we needed more public discussion on the issue, not public hearings. One other qualification is that the committee does not have the opportunity to sit just because it wants to sit when the House is not in session.

We need authorization of the House to sit, is my understanding. The House sits April 1 for one week, so we'd have a week there possibly, and then on the 21st we resume sitting. So we could only sit —

Mr Duncan: Two weeks after the 21st, which is what I called for.

Mr Arnott: But your motion doesn't say it quite that specifically. Is there any other business before the committee, other than this bill?

The Chair: Not that I'm aware of.

Mr Arnott: On that basis, I'd be prepared to support the motion with those qualifications and the understanding that the committee can only sit when it has the authorization of the House or when the House is in session.

The Chair: Is that acceptable to the mover?

Mr Duncan: Subject to the normal rules of the House?

Mr Arnott: I guess.

Mr Jordan: It's a decision for the House leaders.

Mr Duncan: We're giving the House leaders an expression of our desire to consider it.

Mr Jordan: We're wasting the public's time.

Mr Duncan: It's not a waste of time. It's a friendly amendment, subject to the normal rules of the House.

Mr Arnott: I'm not speaking for the government. I'm speaking for myself.

The Chair: I understand. All right, then, we'll put the motion to a vote. All in favour? Opposed? The motion is defeated.

Mr Wildman: I have another motion. In view of the committee's concern about the short time available for public input on Bill 104, as expressed most recently by the MPP for Lanark, Mr Jordan, I move that the committee request that the time allocation motion be amended by the Legislature to allow more time for public hearings by this committee.

The Chair: Debate on this motion?

Mr Wildman: I think it's obvious. I don't really think we need to have a long debate.

The Chair: Then let's not have one.

Mr Wildman: We have a lot of people who want to make presentations. We don't have enough time to hear them all. We only heard about one tenth of the people who had indicated they wanted to make presentations in Toronto. There's a tremendous amount of interest in this, so obviously we need more time. We should ask for the time allocation motion that was moved by the government to be amended to allow for more public input on Bill 104 before it passes.

Mrs McLeod: I would simply add that we've seen the limitations of time and what that does in terms of excluding groups and individuals who are going to be directly affected by the legislation if it's passed. We had to group school boards yesterday. There were boards we had to add at lunch-hour to be able to just give them a hearing. We know that as we go into London, the London board of education has had to be added because it was going to be excluded otherwise. It becomes very clear that there just has not been enough time to hear people who should be represented in a full and fair way.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): I want to respond to that. We did add boards and we tried to accommodate people as best we could. This motion has

been made before and defeated, and in my opinion, you're just playing politics. We've already lost half an hour. People are here and they have busy schedules and we're not getting to the business of the day.

The Chair: Mr Bartolucci, this will be the last comment.

Mr Bartolucci: Absolutely. I take exception with Mr Skarica's assumption that we're playing politics. We're not playing politics at all. We're trying to protect the quality of education for the students of this province. You had a perfect example, the people out here have a perfect example of how insincere the government is to at least recognize the possibility that someone in the opposition has a better idea or an idea that's worth further discussion. That's obviously been shown with today's votes.

I'm telling you, the people of Ontario are upset. They support this motion, they supported Mr Duncan's motion, they support my bill. I'm telling you that if you don't start listening to them, it is going to be the one single reason, the most important reason, that the people of Ontario will not vote for you next time, because you don't want to listen to them.

I give Mr Arnott a great deal of credit. He's the only one who believes that his constituency and his personal ideas are of greater importance than the government's ideas. Mr Wildman is simply asking for more discussion. Mr Duncan was simply asking for more discussion. My bill, this resolution today, was simply asking for further discussion, so that if we're going to do the changes, we can get it right, and you refuse to listen and you refuse to grant those requests. That will not sit well with the people of Ontario.

The Chair: I'd like to move to a vote. All in favour of Mr Wildman's motion? Opposed? The motion is defeated.

Mrs McLeod: I'm not going to ask for a vote on this now because I'm anxious to move on with the hearings. I want to propose a motion that I sincerely hope the government will consider, which is why I want to serve notice of the motion for a later vote.

The motion will be that the standing committee on social development ask that the clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 104 be deferred to allow for consideration of public presentations in the preparation of amendments. I think the committee will appreciate the fact and I think Mr Jordan will appreciate the fact because he was very persuaded by the presentation of the Lanark, Leeds and Grenville, Stormont Dundas and Glengarry, and Prescott and Russell boards that are to be amalgamated, that that amalgamation won't work. We were similarly persuaded, I believe, as a committee by the presentations we heard in Thunder Bay yesterday. I believe we will be similarly persuaded by the presentations we hear today.

Unfortunately, in the way in which the time allocation was set up, we begin clause-by-clause consideration immediately after the last day's hearings. That meant we had to begin the legislative drafting of amendments before the hearings outside Toronto began. I truly believe that if we're to do justice to the public hearings we need at least a day in between, and preferably more, and I don't believe the same urgency to pass clause-by-clause —

The Chair: Mrs McLeod, I appreciate the notice, but the motion, as it's presently worded, I would have to rule

out of order. Could I suggest you work with the clerk to bring in a motion that would not be out of order and we'd find an appropriate time to debate it.

Mrs McLeod: I think it's identical to the wording of motions, except perhaps "ask the House leaders to reconsider" to amend the time allocation motion.

The Chair: I think, since we have the time — we're not dealing with it now — you might just want to reconsider the wording to make sure it's in the proper form.

MANITOULIN BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: Thank you very much, everyone, for being so patient. Thank you in particular to the Manitoulin Board of Education before us today. Mr Scott, welcome. I ask you to present your co-presenter. You will have 15 minutes to make your presentation, and if time permits, the committee will ask you some questions.

Mr Rob Scott: I'd like to introduce Mac Hall. He is our director of education. My name is Rob Scott. I'm chairman of the Manitoulin Board of Education. I'm pleased to have this opportunity to share our hopes and fears concerning the Fewer School Boards Act.

The Manitoulin Board of Education has provided a quality education, sensitive to local needs, for the past 28 years. It has managed its affairs in a prudent and businesslike manner. It has consistently improved its services in response to the needs of its students. During these 28 years the Manitoulin Board of Education has consistently managed the change process.

As the chair of the Manitoulin Board of Education, I take pride in our accomplishments. Our graduation rate is high and our graduates fare well in post-secondary institutions. Our introduction of technology into our classrooms provides one of the highest access rates to computers for our students in the province. We are proud of what our teachers and students are accomplishing.

The Board has also been responsive to local needs and community issues. We have implemented policies and procedures to deal with AIDS, alcohol, drugs and tobacco, anti-racism, family violence and child abuse.

The board has continually demonstrated fiscal responsibility. You can just ask the federations or our administration how difficult it is to get an extra dollar out of the board. We have managed to keep our cost of education below the provincial average. We have done this while ensuring the resources are available to provide a quality education in the classroom.

So when we as a board look at the Fewer School Boards Act we see it as both an opportunity and as a threat. We see it as an opportunity as it is an incomplete solution to the many issues in education. It represents, hopefully, the beginning of a complete reform in education, a reform that has been noted as needed in dozens of reports over the years.

1030

We see it as an opportunity for us to work with our new partners in Espanola and Sudbury, to work together to design and implement a new system that will be stronger and more responsive to the needs of our students, an opportunity to bring together the strengths of our present systems. We believe collectively we can forge

a better and more vibrant system. Towards this end, we have begun discussions; we have begun to seek solutions.

The Fewer School Boards Act is also a threat. It's a threat to the kind of community-based system the people of Manitoulin have grown to expect.

The new district school board will have approximately 18,000 students attending 59 schools. This means there will be 59 school councils advising the new board, possibly 59 sets of recommendations that will be quite contradictory. The Manitoulin Secondary School will become one of 16 secondary schools in the new board. We are very proud of MSS and would not like to see its role diminished in this amalgamation.

In 1969, the board and the local first nations pooled their resources to build what was at the time a state-of-the-art secondary school. Over the years the community has strived to maintain that status. It is the only facility on the island owned by everyone.

Currently, approximately 40% of the student enrolment is students sponsored by the first nations. Over the years we have worked closely with the first nations to ensure MSS meets the needs of their students. We believe our experience provides direction for all those involved in native education. In the new district school board, MSS will have to struggle to maintain its identity, to maintain its focus.

At the political level, the Manitoulin Board of Education has for many years had two native trustees. One represents the first nations belonging to the United Chiefs and Councils of Manitoulin. The other represents Wikwemikong First Nation. These trustees have been active members of the board, bringing their knowledge and expertise to all decisions.

Within the context of the Manitoulin Board of Education, these two representatives are justified and welcome. In the new district school board, the Education Act would permit only one representative from the first nations. In the larger board there would be at least 100 native students, but not the 25% of the total enrolment required to provide for two representatives. In addition, the new district school board will encompass additional first nations communities that have representatives on the Espanola board. We would ask that the EIC in its deliberations work with us to find an equitable solution to this issue.

In conclusion, I am pleased to have had this opportunity to address the committee. Too often we feel only larger and louder voices are heard. Your invitation gives us hope that as the transition process unfolds, our voice will be heard.

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): Thank you for your presentation. I have to say I'm interested in this issue because yesterday we heard extensively the success stories that have existed in smaller school boards across the province and the concern they have that some of those success stories are going to be compromised by a larger jurisdiction.

The perspective I bring is one whereby in my own community, about four years ago, the previous government undertook a major amalgamation in London-Middlesex. I heard from parents and teachers and students in Middlesex at that time, and they were afraid they were

going to lose the identity of what was predominantly a rural school by virtue of it being transferred to an urban board. I would have to say that hasn't occurred. In fact, there are probably as many success stories today about that transfer as there are unsuccessful stories.

Can you help me with this whole issue? What is the fear or what conclusions are you arriving at that would make you believe that some of the success stories you've experienced are going to be compromised by this particular legislation?

Mr Scott: In particular the issue that's a concern is that in the last year or year and a half we've been trying to work even more closely with our first nations partners. We've been working on a tuition agreement that has more native inclusiveness in the school, in the classroom, involving native heritage and native beliefs more so in the curriculum. There is a feeling right now that with the formation of a newer board, where on Manitoulin the percentage of the native students is quite high, in the newer board that percentage will be almost non-existent. There's a feeling, I believe, not only by the board but by some members of the first nations community that the identity they have worked so hard over the years to be able to get into our education system on the island will be lost.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Thank you, Mr Scott and Mr Hall, for making the same trek I made this morning, about two hours over here. This will be where the new board is centred, so people should understand that just to get here on dry roads it's about two hours to arrive.

I think Mr Scott was making an important point. He's written me and the minister about it, and that is the absolutely unique situation Manitoulin Island is in. First of all, geographically it's easily defined, probably the most easily defined board of the entire province because there's water around it. Mr Scott's point is that roughly a third of the total population of Manitoulin, maybe 40%, is first nations people. The community has developed in a unique way to resolve any differences there might be between first nations and the general population.

The school board has done an excellent job of bringing programs to the secondary school that are sensitive to all students within that school. What I think Mr Scott is telling you today is that in this new, huge critical mass that has to extend across a huge portion of northeastern Ontario, that balance on Manitoulin will be broken. I wonder, Mr Scott, if you could maybe elaborate, because I'm not getting the sense that you're being understood.

Mr Scott: I would have to admit that the natural flow from Manitoulin is to Sudbury. That's where we go for medical services, for everything, so from the point of view of it being a burden to the people of Manitoulin to have to have their education system centred in Sudbury, I don't see that as a huge issue.

The issue at hand, and what concerns a lot of the residents of Manitoulin, is that we don't want to become the tail of a Sudbury-driven board. I know that's an issue you've heard across the province. Everyone is saying the same thing. But I think what makes Manitoulin unique is the fact that there is such a large percentage of first nations populations and communities, and over the years

the individual communities, in my opinion, have blended fairly well.

There's been a lot of work done over the years with the board and with the administration at our only high school. That's the only option there is on Manitoulin. We have one high school to service the entire island. There are no options unless parents want to send their children away from home and board them in Sudbury or Sault Ste Marie or where have you.

A lot of time and effort have been spent developing programs that can meet the needs of all our students. The concern is that in a larger board, the concerns that are so important in the Manitoulin, which will be a very small minority on the new board, will be missed.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much, Mr Scott. This issue is a very important one in some areas of the province and certainly very important in Manitoulin, as you've indicated. I'd like to commend the board for the work you've done for the whole community of Manitoulin Island and the work that's part of that with the first nations.

Just to get a bigger picture of this, the new board will encompass the United Chiefs and Councils of Manitoulin, as well as Wikwemikong Unceded First Nation.

Mr Scott: Yes.

Mr Wildman: Wikwemikong would certainly not see itself even now as being properly represented by a representative from the United Chiefs and Councils of Manitoulin. That's right now just on Manitoulin Island. But now the new board is also going to take in a portion of the North Shore tribal council, Espanola, and the first nations in that area, and the tribal council in the Sudbury area, which represents first nations in the Sudbury basin. So you have then four different first nations entities representing quite a large number of first nations. Do you think it's conceivable that even if there were an amendment to the bill, as proposed, the new board would be prepared to have four representatives of first nations on the new board?

1040

Mr Scott: My own opinion would be that I couldn't see that being a reality, the way things stand right now. I don't have the answer as to how that issue can be dealt with.

Mr Wildman: Neither do I.

Mr Scott: I have limited experience dealing with members of the first nations communities. Their interests and values and beliefs are varied from one first nation community to the next. Like I said, we've worked very hard over the years to develop a partnership with our neighbours. We don't want to see that role be diminished to that of a special interest group.

Mr Wildman: Hear, hear.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Scott and Mr Hall. May I say as a frequent visitor to the island of Manitoulin that I've always been impressed with the uniqueness of the place geographically and also culturally, and the fact that it alone has a sovereign state within it, which is the reserve of Wikwemikong, which has never been ceded to the Canadian government. Thank you very much for being here. We really appreciate the long drive that you've had.

ONTARIO ENGLISH CATHOLIC
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION,
NIPISSING ELEMENTARY UNIT,
SUDBURY SECONDARY AND
ELEMENTARY UNITS

The Chair: May I call upon the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, Sudbury elementary unit, Sudbury secondary unit and Nipissing elementary unit. Welcome to the committee.

Mr Bob Kirwan: My name is Bob Kirwan. I'm with the Sudbury elementary unit. To my left is Nina Stapleton, with the Sudbury secondary unit, and to my far left is Ann Coates, from the Nipissing unit. We intend to make a few brief comments each on Bill 104 and its probable consequences, and then hopefully there will be some time for questions. We will try to be brief.

I guess the main concern I have with Bill 104 is that it fails to address all of the elements that may form part of the transition in education governance in Ontario. As long as we're unaware of the changes that will be coming with respect to education finance, with respect to enhanced powers to be given to school advisory councils and with respect to the revision of the system of collective bargaining in the province, we really cannot adequately make any comments on how education in the province is going to be affected.

Because Bill 104 deals in isolation with only one aspect of all the changes, it is our strong recommendation that before proceeding with Bill 104, the full education package be put on the table so we can see everything that is there. Only then can we be sure that Bill 104 is not just a smokescreen to try and extract \$2 billion from education to pay for a tax cut that was promised in the last election.

Premier Harris has stated time and time again that the government is committed to quality education. We have grave concerns, however, with the probable consequences of Bill 104, and at this time we cannot see how the quality of education can be preserved if the government continues on its present course.

There is absolutely no way that publicly funded schools can maintain the quality of education if this government intends to reduce the amount of time teachers have to prepare and organize instructional materials for the classroom; if this government intends to reduce the amount of time teachers have to work with special needs children; if this government intends to prevent young children from attending junior kindergarten and getting a solid foundation for their future education; and if this government intends to reduce the funding to school boards while at the same time preventing boards from raising taxes to fund the shortfall. We feel this is going to create a climate that's conducive to widespread growth of private and charter schools.

To conclude my part, I again strongly urge that when you return to the Legislature, you recommend that Bill 104 be put on hold until we can see the whole picture.

Mrs Nina Stapleton: From my perspective, it appears that the education reform that's before us represents just one element of the landscape of Ontario, which this government proposes to devastate in order to bring the southern states north of the 49th parallel.

Bill 104 in itself does not address all the components which may form part of the transition in education governance. Some of these components relate to education finance, school advisory councils and collective bargaining in the education sector. Bill 104 deals with only one aspect of the many proposed changes to the education system. The scope of Bill 104 will only become apparent as these other amendments are introduced and come into play. The government appears to be isolating various components of its proposed changes and hence raises many suspicions about its real intent and true objectives. There's been no hard evidence presented by the government which would indicate that the proposed changes will lead to any improvements in the quality of education of our youth in Ontario.

We are seriously concerned about the creation of the Education Improvement Commission and the scope of powers granted to it. The creation of this commission undermines the legitimacy of democratically elected local bodies. It appears that the government is eradicating age-old principles of democracy in this province, be it in the closure of hospitals or the diminishment of school boards. It appears that local control or autonomy in any arena is of no concern. The Education Improvement Commission extended trusteeship undermines the autonomy, accountability and legitimacy of democratically elected school boards. It would appear presently in Ontario that the people must serve the government, and not the government the people.

The commission has the authority to consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on how to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards. Special education teachers, librarians, guidance counsellors, music teachers and the like all contribute in a positive manner to the educational experience of Ontario youth. It's incumbent upon us to ensure that our young people's future is not jeopardized. The concept of outsourcing in education perhaps can be compared to training housekeeping staff in hospitals to provide bedside nursing services.

The parents and young people in Ontario are being scammed if we try to lead them to believe that the quality of education is not going to suffer from all of these proposed changes. All of the proposed changes — let's face it — are driven by dollars, not by any concern about quality education for our youth.

As a parent, I believe the real intent of this government is to strip away dollars and strip away the educational infrastructure support system such that the public education system in Ontario will go the way of education systems of many of the states south of the border. Hardworking parents will be forced to demand a voucher system of education, which they will be forced to top up with any tax reduction they receive from this government's initiatives, along with more money of their own, in order to ensure a quality education for their children. Hence, Ontarians will see quality education for all Ontario youth become only a privilege for the few. Ontarians will pay highly for their tax break. We will see increased crime rates, increased unemployment and increased unrest in a province once the envy of many.

The progress of Bill 104 should be halted until the government puts the whole agenda on the table for the constituents of this province to assess in order to make informed decisions. The government has been given a mandate to govern this province, not decimate it.

Miss Ann Coates: Good day. I thank the committee for allowing me to come and share my concerns. I work for the Nipissing District Roman Catholic Separate School Board. We have 13 elementary schools in our present district.

My colleagues have covered many of the major issues within Bill 104, so what I would like to do is actually talk about the impact of expanding our school board into a new district school board.

The model currently proposed in the act reduces six existing separate school boards to a single district school board in the northeastern region. The proposed district school board in the northeastern region will extend almost 800 kilometres, from North Bay through Kirkland Lake, Timiskaming, Cochrane and Iroquois Falls, Timmins, Kapuskasing to Hearst, over areas where geographic isolation, difficult road conditions, transportation costs and the scarcity of technological tools are a daily reality in northern Ontario. Many of the concerns that I have are based on exactly those concerns of the daily conditions we're facing here in North Bay.

1050

Constitutional issues — the change in the borders: With such an area, how will that affect the ability of our elected separate trustees to adequately represent the local communities due to the distance and communication technology difference?

We also have two native communities within our district, Cree in the north and Ojibway in the south. How is that going to impact on their representation and their input into a new district board?

Geographic considerations: The expanse of the new district school board presents serious practical concerns, especially in terms of weather and road conditions. A round trip from North Bay to Hearst represents 1,600 kilometres. It's an 18-to-20-hour travel time by car, bus or train in ideal conditions. The air corridor that our area serves is one of the most costly corridors in the province. It would not be an easy commute to visit schools within our district if it became necessary. The distance would have a negative impact on the ability of our district school board to conduct business with parents, staff and trustees. Communication to establish a sense of community between schools, central office and parents may deteriorate because of the large distances and the resulting difficulties in holding regular meetings.

The proposed district school board does not address the distinct community differences between the northern and the southern portions of the region. There has been a historic convergence in northeastern Ontario, in the north to Timmins and in the south to North Bay. This does not recognize the different practices, approaches and expectations of the community within the northeastern region.

Our educational partnerships: As a northern separate school board, we have administration costs of below 3% and a per pupil funding rate of less than the provincial average. We have a no-frills board. We have had to

establish current informal and formal partnership agreements and they may be in jeopardy because now we are not coterminous with the public school boards.

The infrastructure that has been established by the Nipissing District Roman Catholic Separate School Board to promote efficiencies cannot be extended to the proposed district school board due to distance, transportation and communication difficulties in northeastern Ontario. Any alternative infrastructure procedures would prove to be more costly and less efficient, and any additional financial stress due to the costs of the proposed district school board will have to impact directly on our classrooms.

The Nipissing elementary unit supports the proposal of the Nipissing District Roman Catholic school board in its application to the Ministry of Education and Training for a reconsideration and review of the proposed board amalgamation in northeastern Ontario.

The Chair: Miss Coates, may I ask you to wrap up, please.

Miss Coates: We would like to have the same boundaries as our public school counterparts. Thank you for letting me make a representation to you.

The Chair: We appreciate your being here. I know that you had to drive a fair distance to be here and we appreciate the views that you've stated for us today.

The Larchwood Public School Advisory Council, Trish Eisenhour? Is the Larchwood Public School Advisory Council here?

Clerk of the Committee (Ms Tonia Grannum) That's the one that cancelled.

The Chair: Oh, all right.

JOHN FOLLIS

The Chair: John Follis? Thank you very much for coming. We look forward to having your presentation.

Mr John Follis: As you can see, I am not Trish Eisenhour.

The Chair: There was a cancellation and you were kind enough to move up to the spot.

Mr Follis: When I saw the length of time this process may take — I was originally to address you at 3:40 — I thought if I also was going to get back to North Bay today, it's best to see if I could jump in early.

I might say right at the beginning that I come here with no vested interests; that is, I represent no school board, never having been on a board, I am not sitting on one and have no intention of running for one. I'm also not a politician and have no intention of being a politician. What I am is a person passionately concerned about education. I have, if I may humbly say, been involved in raising over \$1 million in scholarships for students. I have worked towards higher levels of education in northeastern Ontario, so I hope you'll accept my viewpoints as being from one who is concerned about our children.

I thank you for being here in Sudbury today, and hopefully not to defend your own opinions or political beliefs but to take the time to listen and document the opinions of myself and other residents of Ontario before making up this new legislation.

It's recognized that Ontario school boards have not changed much since those times when having to deal with the question of the use of calculators in the classrooms preoccupied board meetings. Let me, if you will, offer a couple of reasons why I think reorganization is necessary.

Case in point: In one Ontario school board its objective is to have three computers in each classroom in five years. To me this is criminal. It's also assuming that they reach their goal. I can assure you that there is no shortage of computers in their boardroom. Might I guess that in five years there will be more students with computers at home than in our schools, providing they reach their goals.

I share in your belief of well-paying jobs, and not minimum-wage jobs, for the graduates of our system. I quote Peter Broadmore of the National Consortium of Scientific and Education Studies, who recently told his committee that in disciplines such as mathematics, computer science and software engineering, the supply does not even come close to reaching the demand. The Software Human Resources Council estimates that 30,000 jobs could be created if skilled software personnel were available. In the biotechnology field, again major shortages. Last year nearly 50,000 immigrants were welcomed into Canada because of a shortage of skilled Canadians. This is the kind of high-paying ecojobs of the present and of the future — and the school board has as its goal three computers in five years?

It is my opinion that every cost not directly related to the actual teaching of students be examined, with the goal of putting our financial resources back into the classroom and not into boardrooms.

Over the next few weeks, numbers will be thrown around — 50%, 75%, 80%, 90% of spending is outside the classroom. But will we hear about the numbers of students who, for whatever reason, never seem to get challenged, who are never really were stimulated to learn and create, or the students who are pawns in a game played by stakeholders preoccupied with their agendas other than teaching and motivating young minds? We should not lose sight of the goal. The goal is to raise our educational standards, to equip our children with a competitive knowledge base. Yes, despite the rhetoric and disclaiming by some groups, we live in a global economy and we must be able to compete. We all know national and international testing has proven embarrassing at best, but when our students spend less time in the classroom than students in other industrialized countries, we cannot expect more than embarrassment.

Education is not a reason to establish power groups where power is the goal and education is the medium. Education still remains, in my opinion, the reason why we have schools. It is there for the students, not the teachers and not the boards. One of the most interesting exercises I ask you to consider the next time you are at home is, ask the first person see or you come into contact with the following questions:

(1) What issue have you last talked to an elected school board official about in the past 20 years? I was going to say one year, but let's go 20 years.

(2) Name three elected school board officials.

(3) When and where does the school board meet?

If your experience is anything like mine, you must question the local need as it now currently is.

1100

On the other hand, I gather from the changes being proposed that parents will have a clear and consistent standard for what students should be learning, and have input at the school level in areas concerning academic progress, discipline and programs.

Proposed changes will sit very heavy on some people. Some will see changes through territorial lenses, some from a dollars-and-cents perspective, some may resist based on tradition and some just resist change.

To say our present board system shouldn't be changed or tampered with is to accept 1960s planning for the 21st century. It is accepting portable classrooms for students and glassed-in office suites for those responsible for buying portable classrooms. The same leadership that allowed the removal of province-wide testing is now being tested, and so it should be.

In conclusion, let me again thank you for your open-minded approach to the required changes. Let us — parents, taxpayers and politicians — keep our eye on the real objective of education and acknowledge that restructuring will help us refocus.

One last point, if I may: When discussing with others many topics ranging from summer school to municipal use of school buildings, the subject of the school year as we currently know it came about, where we close down some time in June and reopen some time in September. We all know the parameters that went into that choice, a good choice at the time but a carryover from days gone by when students were needed on the farm to plant, cultivate and harvest crops during the summer months. It is time to rethink the present and plan for a greater tomorrow for our children.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Follis, for taking time out of your busy day to be here and share your views with us. Have a pleasant drive back.

Mr Duncan: Can I ask a question of the ministry?

The Chair: I'll call on the Women Teachers' Associations of Sudbury, Manitoulin, Espanola, North Shore, Timmins and Timiskaming, and as they make their way, Mr Duncan.

Mr Duncan: I wonder if the ministry can provide any background information in written form to this committee about the outcomes related to this bill; how much higher they expect student scores to be on standardized testing as a result of Bill 104.

Mr Skarica: There's a ministry staff official here and I'll forward that request to him.

SUDBURY, MANITOULIN, ESPANOLA, NORTH SHORE, TIMMINS AND TIMISKAMING WOMEN TEACHERS' ASSOCIATIONS

The Chair: Welcome, ladies, and thank you very much for coming.

Ms Val Duhaime: Good morning. I'm Val Duhaime, representing the Sudbury Women Teachers' Association. To my left is Joann Smith from the North Shore WTA. To my right is Linda Leonard from the Espanola WTA. To my far right is Leslie Field from the Manitoulin Island

WTA. We'd better get to know each other better; we're going to be partners very soon.

Mr Wildman: It's not a foregone conclusion.

Ms Duhaime: Well, that's what some people say.

The six associations that I will speak on behalf of this morning represent approximately 800 women who teach in public elementary schools within the jurisdictions of their respective boards of education. I might say that because of that we were delighted yesterday to find out at 9:30 in the morning that indeed we could go ahead and prepare a brief and you could slip us in here today to speak with you.

As educators, we are committed to ensuring equity in educational opportunities for our students and providing our young people with the necessary skills and attitudes they will require to allow them to make meaningful contributions to our communities and to society as a whole. We are commonsense people who believe in accountability and embrace positive, planned change as a vehicle for improvement.

It is for these reasons that we view the intent of Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, with some suspicion and a large measure of confusion. We believe that the vagueness of the bill and the obvious lack of implementation details will most probably lead to turmoil within the Ontario system of education and will certainly have a negative impact on the rights and responsibilities of all local community partners within education. Indeed, a crisis may be possible after all. Bill 104 appears to have been developed not to improve learning for children but to cut costs and grab central control over the delivery and funding of education in Ontario.

Recently Premier Harris attempted to rationalize the strong No vote on the megacity question by stating that the results were skewed because voters were confused by the myriad of major changes proposed by the government, including education finance and downloading of services to municipalities. As much as I hate to admit it, there's probably some truth to his statement, but indeed what has he learned from this? Obviously very little, because the government continues to forge ahead with other initiatives without in-depth study or planning and without involving stakeholders in the process before — I repeat, before — decisions are made.

Further proof that Ontario citizens are frustrated is evidenced in a \$177,000 Decima poll commissioned by the government in the fall of 1996 which concluded that "The public feels it has no voice in decisions being made about their health care system." We shudder to think that it will take the government another \$200,000 expenditure to alert them to the fact that educational stakeholders and indeed the general public are bewildered by the magnitude of the proposed changes in educational governance and funding and cannot be expected to reasonably cope with the speed at which these changes are being proposed and implemented.

Although there may well be merit in the amalgamation of some local school boards, such wholesale and in some cases irrational mergers as outlined in Bill 104 will undoubtedly result in a reduction of local input and accountability which cannot be rationalized through the resulting relatively minor cost saving.

Just as an aside — it's not in my notes — I was thinking this morning as I was reading this over, having my coffee, that that \$200,000 — and I'm sure Mr Bartolucci would be interested in this — would have put five full-time teachers back into overcrowded classrooms in Sudbury, would have put perhaps 10 half-time special ed resource teachers back into overcrowded classrooms in Sudbury and could possibly have put 20 quarter-time guidance counsellors back into overcrowded classrooms in Sudbury. But indeed, we all have different priorities.

The size of the proposed Espanola-Manitoulin-Sudbury district board is very large, encompassing one city, numerous small towns and villages and a large rural area. Unfortunately, history shows us that in similar situations, the larger, wealthier, more densely populated area assumes a role of control rather than one of partnership. What guarantees are in place that concerns of all areas, big or small, involved in this amalgamation will be reflected in overall decision-making?

The Sudbury Board of Education has been forced to make difficult decisions regarding the closure of smaller schools. Will some of the smaller, more isolated island schools be added to the endangered species list? Residents of larger centres do not always appreciate the role of the school in a small community, where the school is often the nucleus of that community, attracting residents with young families, supporting a variety of employment opportunities and establishing a focal point which encourages the whole community, the whole village to assume responsibility for the education of children.

Timmins and Timiskaming will be part of the new, amalgamated district board number 1, which takes in a geographic area that stretches from Hornepayne to Temagami, a distance comparable to Timmins from Toronto. Barb and Irene apologize they can't be here today. It's a long drive on short notice.

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Mr Wildman: That's going to be a problem in the future.

Ms Duhaime: More than likely.

There are no direct flights between these communities and it takes approximately eight hours of driving time to connect with them all. The winters are long — you may have noticed that, those of you from the south — and the roads are hazardous, but not today. Regular face-to-face dialogue between educational partners will be almost impossible and communication breakdowns are inevitable. Currently there appear to be no plans in place to deal with this serious problem.

In the past few years, parental and community involvement within schools has increased dramatically. This has resulted in the development of highly successful collaborative relationships which have impacted positively on the learning environment for students. School advisory council members have willingly accepted the responsibility of providing input and support to the individual schools and to the boards. The government has indicated that the scope and powers of these councils in educational governance will be increased and they will fill the void created by dismantling local school boards. Parental involvement is crucial, however details of the government's plan of action in this area are, not surprisingly, sketchy.

There can be no assurance that the present equity in educational programming provided throughout a region by a local school board can be mirrored in individual schools governed by individual councils. Also, we can foresee great difficulty attracting people to serve on these councils given that parents already have a vast number of family and work responsibilities to meet. Informal surveys undertaken by the Sudbury WTA indicate that most respondents feel that they do not have the necessary time nor the expertise to assume larger roles in the development of discipline, curriculum or reporting policies other than to provide input.

Under Bill 104, the Education Improvement Commission, an appointed body, will have unprecedented powers to control school board budgets, staffing and distribution of board property during the transition period. There is no appeal process regarding the decisions of the commission. Its decisions are final and cannot be reviewed, even through the courts. A great deal of power will rest in the hands of five to seven appointees who depend on the government for their living. Although the commission will have the authority to appoint local committees to address specific issues related to transition, there is no guarantee that their recommendations will be acted upon or indeed even considered.

To place such power in the hands of a few and to limit the input and responses from local citizens is an action that in our minds can only be described as repressive and undemocratic. It's ironic that a government that has recently expended large sums of money to advertise to the public that it is implementing accountability in education would at the same time appoint a powerful, independent body that is accountable to no one.

There are no clauses in Bill 104 which deal specifically with teacher-board negotiations. The problems of melding several collective agreements into one are vast and they're varied. Surely it's incumbent upon our elected leaders — you — to ensure that the legally bargained rights and working conditions of all educational workers are protected. Surely there is no need for us to worry that our elected leaders would take advantage of the transition period mandated under Bill 104 to unilaterally strip teachers of salary and benefits that they have negotiated in good faith. Surely it is not the intent of our elected leaders to have teachers finance the promised tax cut.

We believe that when school boards are amalgamated, collective agreements must be in place that will guarantee protection from job loss due to amalgamation, maintain current contract forms, honour seniority rights, safeguard sick leave and retirement gratuity benefits, recognize experience and grid placement and deny involuntary transfers outside the boundaries of the original school board. These issues must be addressed quickly and action must be taken, and that action must be the result of meaningful dialogue among the province, the boards and the representative teacher federations.

In closing, may we say that we believe this government's vision of the future of education in Ontario is blurred by dollar signs. This government is moving too far, too fast, providing little concrete evidence of a well-thought-out educational plan other than to reduce expen-

ditures in order to finance an ill-advised tax cut. We strongly urge this committee to urge this government to slow down, to consult meaningfully with stakeholders and to develop in a collaborative forum a detailed, long-term plan for education in this province, focusing on improvements which directly impact on positive learning opportunities for children and ensuring that the specific needs of local communities are safeguarded. This is the democratic way. Thank you.

Mrs McLeod: There are so many areas to explore that come from your presentation. It's the first chance we've had in the area to start to get a sense of the sheer magnitude of the board groupings, and because you represent such a diversity of boards, I'd like to just ask you about that.

I don't know if you spent any time looking at the proposals that came from the Sweeney task force, the school board reduction report. I was trying to do a quick count as you were describing the areas that the boards you represent cover. It looks to me as though the Sweeney recommendations would have had about nine boards in the area compared to the three that this now represents. Is that right?

Ms Duhaime: One of us had better answer quickly. We're running out of time. I believe that probably would have been a better solution. I'm not sure of the number but I do know that the Sweeney recommendations did call for more boards in the northern region; the exact number I'm not sure of.

The geographical distances are very, very difficult, and I will admit, and my partners here will too, not to the extent in our own area as they are in district board 1. I don't know what those people are going to do. I know I'd feel awfully left out if I were a citizen in that area.

Mr Wildman: You refer in passing to board number 1, which is going to go from Hornepayne all the way along Highway 11, from Hearst, through Timmins, to Temagami. It's about an eight-hour drive from one end to the other.

I would like to ask, though, specifically with regard to the overall presentation you've made, do you see anything in this bill, Bill 104, which will improve education in the classroom for students, which is what we're supposedly here about?

Ms Duhaime: In the specific details in the bill, and there aren't too many specific ones, I see nothing that refers to the improving of learning opportunities for children. Perhaps that's going to come later, but then we don't know that. That's why it's difficult to review this bill when this government doesn't even know what they're going to do with all the other parts of education. But I see nothing in that bill that refers to kids, that refers to learning at all.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much for your presentation this morning and your very unique sense of humour. You have tried to make light of it. I just wanted to clarify one thing. I want to make two points first. The first point is, the debate on education governance in your opinion has been going on for how long?

Mr Wildman: A hundred and fifty years.

Mr O'Toole: I'm only trying to establish that it's not a recent debate, to be fair.

Ms Duhaime: No, it is not a recent debate.

Mr O'Toole: All three parties are clearly on record that education governance — the boards had to be restructured.

Ms Duhaime: Absolutely.

Mr O'Toole: So to be fair to the public here listening today, it's not new. This bill in itself has nothing to do with curriculum, has nothing to do with teachers. In the purest sense, it has to do with education governance and really, subtly, funding and constitutional entitlement groups and how we get from where we are to where we should be, the implementation commission. So it would be wrong again to assume this bill on its own has anything to do with curriculum and improving the quality of students. It is ensuring the structure to delivery by removing the administrative top.

Do you agree that there is too much administration? You're a teacher. You're a front-line deliverer. In your opinion, would you think there is too much at the top? How much, I am not sure, whether it's 5% or —

The Chair: Ms Fields wants to respond, Ms Duhaime.

Ms Leslie Field: May I answer that?

Ms Duhaime: Sure you can.

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Ms Field: I represent the Manitoulin Women Teachers' Association, Linda is Espanola and Joann is North Shore. Our boards have worked for several years now in a five-board amalgamation that works very well in purchasing, providing curriculum and so on. That initiative was a grass-roots initiative. It worked because there was a need and they wanted it to work. It was not top-down administration just to save money.

If you allow the people of Ontario to do what is best for their areas, I think you will find that change will take place and it will be positive for the children, the family, the community, and that is what we're concerned about.

The Chair: Thank you very much for being here today. It's extraordinary that the six associations were able to come together on such short notice and present a brief.

Ms Field: You should see our phone bills.

The Chair: We do appreciate it. Thank you.

Est-ce que je peux avoir le Conseil des écoles séparées catholique du district de Sudbury, M. Lefebvre ? Ms McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, once again Mr O'Toole makes references to what other parties might or might not have supported in terms of school board reorganization and restructuring. If he is going to continue to make that note, I will continue to make the note that any support we would have had for any school board restructuring would have been conditional upon its making sense and being shown to be cost-effective for students in a classroom.

The proposals that are before us today — and I think it's important, as we're here in Sudbury, to please recognize the differences between the only other proposals that were ever put forward for school board consolidation, which were Sweeney proposals, and the ones that were presented with Bill 104.

Just take the district 1 that was mentioned. It is huge, and I ask members of the committee to look at the comparisons between the Sweeney proposals — and I'm

not suggesting those were ideal — and the ones that are before us now compared to those.

The Chair: I've allowed a fair amount of latitude to all members of the committee to express their views. I would like to remind us all that we're here to listen to the public, and let's try to keep those interventions to a minimum on all sides.

CONSEIL DES ÉCOLES SÉPARÉES CATHOLIQUES DU DISTRICT DE SUDBURY

La Présidente : Bienvenue. C'est un plaisir de vous avoir avec nous.

Mrs Claire Pilon: Good morning, Madame Chair. I am not Léo Lefebvre. I am Claire Pilon. I am president of the French section of the Sudbury separate school board. I have with me members of the community who work with us in this great project that we're undertaking.

M. Arnel Michel is a businessman, M^{me} Pauline Pelland is a member of the parents council, M. Luc Filion is the custodian with our board and Adrien Montpellier is a secondary student.

L'enseignement catholique en langue française à Sudbury remonte à 1884. En 1969, 25 commissions scolaires ont été fusionnées pour former le conseil scolaire séparé du district judiciaire de Sudbury. Depuis l'automne 1996, sept conseillères et conseillers élus ont formé la section de langue française du conseil scolaire et pour gérer 33 écoles, dont quatre écoles secondaires, pour un total d'environ 8 500 élèves.

La section de langue française du conseil appuie le projet de loi 104 pour les raisons principales suivantes :

Les écoles séparées catholiques en Ontario, garanties en vertu de l'article 93 de la Loi constitutionnelle, sont maintenues ;

Le droit de gestion scolaire que confère l'article 23 de la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés aux minorités de langues officielles habitant en milieu minoritaire au Canada sera appliqué en Ontario français ;

Des modifications législatives ou réglementaires à venir serviront à aplanir des difficultés ou à résoudre des problèmes de mise en oeuvre du nouveau régime ; et

Aucun droit acquis n'est renoncé, ni troqué par la communauté franco-ontarienne, notamment le droit d'obtenir des jugements des tribunaux sur diverses questions et le pouvoir de taxation des éventuels conseils de district des écoles séparées de langue française.

À trois reprises en sept ans, la section de langue française du conseil a demandé au gouvernement de l'Ontario d'établir un conseil scolaire catholique français dans la région de Sudbury. Les requêtes adressées au gouvernement libéral en juin 1989, au gouvernement néo-démocrate en juin 1992 et au conservateur en août 1996 ont été reçues défavorablement.

Les conseillères et conseillers de la section appuient la mise en oeuvre de la gestion scolaire française pleine et entière sur l'ensemble du sol ontarien. La section de langue française est prête à prendre les grands moyens pour obtenir la pleine gestion scolaire sur son territoire. Deux avis juridiques commandés l'automne dernier recommandent à la section de procéder par « requête en révision judiciaire », en Cour divisionnaire, afin d'obtenir gain de cause au chapitre de la gestion.

En novembre 1996, un comité élargi de la section sur la gestion scolaire est établi avec des représentants de langue française de plusieurs groupes intéressés à l'éducation, soit les élèves, les parents, les enseignants, les directeurs d'école, les concierges, les personnes des milieux d'affaires, le clergé et les communautés religieuses, qui endossent, à l'unanimité, la création d'un conseil scolaire catholique de langue française pour Sudbury.

La section catholique de langue française accepte de se transformer seule en conseil de district ou de se fusionner avec des sections minoritaires avoisinantes dans le but de créer un nouveau conseil scolaire de district. Nous savons qu'au courant de la mise en oeuvre de cette loi, il y aura des difficultés, mais nous sommes convaincus que les problèmes ne sont pas insurmontables et qu'ils pourront se régler en cours de route.

La section de langue française constate que plusieurs groupes ont un rôle à jouer dans la mise en oeuvre du nouveau régime de gestion scolaire en Ontario. La législature ontarienne débattrait certes d'autres modifications législatives en matière d'éducation d'ici à l'automne prochain. Le Conseil des ministres, la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, les comités d'amélioration de l'éducation et le ministère de l'Éducation et de la Formation sont des organismes gouvernementaux qui participeront à la réalisation de ce projet d'envergure. Les conseillères et conseillers scolaires, le personnel des conseils scolaires existants, les associations d'enseignants, les syndicats, les groupes de parents, les élèves et le clergé seront également impliqués dans ce dossier. Du travail de planification devra même être entrepris par les autorités municipales.

Les conseillères et conseillers scolaires de la section communiquent avec des représentants de ces groupes depuis le dépôt du projet de loi 104. Des suggestions pratiques ont été faites à certains groupes dans le but d'aligner correctement la mise en oeuvre de nouveaux conseils scolaires de district. Àuprès des instances appropriées, la section a déjà souligné l'importance de régler rapidement des questions de base telles que : l'établissement des secteurs qui relèveront de la compétence des conseils scolaires ; le calcul du nombre des membres de chaque conseil scolaire ; l'établissement aux fins électorales de régions géographiques ; la répartition des membres d'un conseil scolaire entre les régions géographiques ; la préparation de listes d'électrices et d'électeurs pour les quatre types de conseils ; ainsi que les fonctions que conserveront les nouveaux conseils scolaires et les fonctions reliées à l'éducation qui seront transférées aux gouvernements municipaux.

Les membres de la section ont aussi fait connaître leur point de vue en prodiguant des avis tels que : la nomination de deux personnes franco-ontariennes, dont au moins une catholique, pour siéger à la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation ; l'embauche d'employés de langue française pour former des unités administratives au sein de la Commission et pour travailler dans le dossier à partir des bureaux de district du ministère ; l'établissement de comités d'amélioration de l'éducation de langue française ; la création d'un fonds de transition ministériel pour supporter la mise en place de conseils ; et l'élaboration d'un modèle de financement de l'éducation équitable

pour tous les conseils compris. Ceci inclut des sommes de rattrapage à l'intention des élèves qui fréquentent les écoles séparées de langue française.

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Les conseillers et conseillères scolaires de la section travailleront de concert avec tous les partenaires du monde de l'éducation catholique franco-ontarienne afin de s'assurer de mettre en place de manière ordonnée un éventuel conseil scolaire de district d'écoles séparées de langue française pour desservir la région de Sudbury.

À l'heure actuelle, les intentions du gouvernement veulent que la section catholique de Sudbury soit jumelée avec quatre autres sections minoritaires, soit Michipicoten, Sault-Ste-Marie, Rive-Nord et Chapleau. Ce nouveau conseil numéro 61 dispenserait de l'enseignement à environ 10 250 élèves dans 43 établissements scolaires.

Les porte-parole des cinq sections minoritaires du «centre-nord» ont déjà organisé une réunion qui aura lieu à la mi-avril à Sault-Ste-Marie. À ce forum, les participants feront place à plusieurs groupes intéressés et ils s'attendent à une participation de tous les partenaires impliqués dans l'éducation.

Pour conclure, je voudrais indiquer que la section catholique de langue française du Conseil des écoles séparées catholiques du district de Sudbury appuie le projet de loi 104.

Les conseillères et conseillers scolaires tiennent cependant à souligner que la situation scolaire pour l'Ontario français est très différente de celle de la population ontarienne dans son ensemble. La mise en oeuvre de conseils scolaires de district de langue française doit tenir compte des spécificités de l'Ontario français, dont celle d'un effectif scolaire à 83 % catholique. Ceci est comparatif à 72 % de l'effectif scolaire anglo-ontarien qui fréquente des écoles publiques.

Le nombre de conseillères et conseillers scolaires doit être suffisamment élevé pour être représentatif d'une réalité francophone dispersée à travers le nord de la province et afin d'assurer une gestion saine et efficace.

Aussi, la réforme de la gestion scolaire se pose différemment et plus durement pour l'Ontario français. La communauté franco-ontarienne doit essentiellement créer des conseils scolaires alors que la majorité de langue anglaise doit fusionner des entités existantes en conseils plus grands.

Les conseillères et les conseillers de la section suivront de très près les travaux et les discussions concernant le nouveau modèle de financement de l'éducation en Ontario. La section voudra s'assurer que la formule de financement sera équitable pour tous, qu'elle tiendra compte du coût de l'éducation des élèves et des circonstances particulières.

La Présidente : Merci bien, Madame Pilon. Nous avons presque trois minutes pour des questions. We have one minute per party. Ms Martel.

M^{me} Shelley Martel (Sudbury-Est) : Merci pour votre participation ici ce matin. Je peux comprendre la raison pour laquelle vous voulez avoir un conseil ici à Sudbury, et je peux accepter aussi la raison pour laquelle vous êtes d'accord avec le projet de loi, parce que à ce moment, ça donne la responsabilité et ça donne la création d'un conseil scolaire ici à Sudbury pour les francophones à l'échelle des écoles séparées.

Mais j'ai un problème. C'est que le gouvernement n'a pas donné au public jusqu'ici la formule de financement pour l'éducation. Je crains en ce moment qu'à la fin, les écoles francophones, les conseils scolaires francophones, ne vont pas avoir assez de fonds pour que les écoles et aussi pour que le conseil puissent fonctionner effectivement pour les francophones.

Alors, ma question : Est-ce que vous avez des garanties en ce moment de la part du gouvernement d'avoir une formule d'éducation, une formule de financement équitable, qui peut améliorer la situation des francophones en Ontario ?

M^{me} Pilon : Non. Nous n'avons aucune garantie de financement. C'est une de nos inquiétudes. C'est pour cela que nous guetons de près les démarches qui seront prises. Puis une chose qui va de pair avec la gestion, c'est le financement. Si nous n'avons pas le financement équitable, avoir la gestion, c'est rien.

M. Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): Bienvenue ici aujourd'hui. Ma question est très brève ce matin. Comme vous le savez, les territoires vont beaucoup changer avec le projet de loi 104. Est-ce que ça vous cause beaucoup de difficultés ? Est-ce que ça vous inquiète un peu, avoir les distances entre les —

M^{me} Pilon : C'est évident que nous aurions préféré avoir notre conseil, mais nous sommes et nous avons toujours été ouverts à fusionner avec d'autres sections minoritaires. Nous sommes chanceux plus que d'autres conseils puisque nous travaillons déjà avec les sections de Chapleau, Sault-Ste-Marie, Rive-Nord et Michipicoten au sein de la «co-op» d'éducation que nous avons établie il y a quelques années. Alors, on connaît les gens, on a déjà commencé à avoir des rencontres, et puis on est confiant que ça peut fonctionner.

Mais il est évident que oui, il y a les distances. On faudra s'organiser parce que ce n'est pas facile pour les gens de se rencontrer du vivant. On va devoir s'organiser autrement.

M. Beaubien : Dans la passé étaient-ils forcés à travailler avec vous autres ?

M^{me} Pilon : Non. C'est parce qu'on le voulait. C'est à l'avantage de tout le monde de travailler ensemble quand on est minoritaire. Alors oui, ça fait quelques années qu'on travaille ensemble, puis on est chanceux, mais il y a quand même encore beaucoup d'inquiétudes : si on va avoir les réunions, combien de conseils scolaires. Ce sont toutes les questions qui ne sont pas réglées.

Mr Bartolucci: Claire, thank you very much for your presentation. If there's a part of Bill 104 I agree with, this is it. I know from 30 years of service that there's an excellent cooperation between the francophone and the anglophone population in Sudbury. It will be a model board; there's absolutely no question about that.

Given the ramifications, though, that the government is placing on you with the EIC, do you see the problems which will evolve with regard to handling the money, and would you like to just outline some of your concerns to the government members with regard to that?

Mrs Pilon: The first concern we have is to have the money.

Mr Bartolucci: Right.

Mrs Pilon: Once we have the money, we're guaranteed we have the financing, I'm sure we'll find ways of dealing

with it. But our main problem now is to make sure that we have the money.

Mr Bartolucci: Absolutely. Thank you.

La Présidente : Je vous remercie tous d'être venus ici ce matin pour partager vos opinions et la position de votre conseil scolaire.

ESPANOLA HIGH SCHOOL

The Chair: Espanola High School, Megan Boardman. Welcome, Ms Boardman.

Ms Megan Boardman: Good morning. Before I begin my presentation, I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Megan Boardman and I'm an OAC student at Espanola High School. Espanola is a community of about 5,500 people and it is located about an hour west of here. I am the editor of our school newspaper, which publishes on a weekly basis on the World Wide Web, and I am also a student representative on the EHS school advisory council. However, I'm here today as a concerned citizen. I am very worried about the direction in which this government is taking education and I have a number of concerns about their latest piece of legislation, Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act. I would like to thank the committee for giving me this opportunity to come here today.

As we all know, the amalgamation of school boards is not a new idea and it is certainly something that has been discussed in the province of Ontario for quite some time. However, I think most of us assumed that democracy at the local level would still be preserved when school boards were amalgamated. Sadly, Bill 104 does not do this, and I think this bill will be particularly harmful to northern Ontario students.

Bill 104 significantly erodes the democratic rights of rural northern Ontario residents. We are facing a merger of 28 English-language public boards into a mere six. Each of these boards will be governed by anywhere from five to 12 trustees. Since these trustees will be allocated according to size and density of the electoral population within the school board, it would be reasonable to assume that northern Ontario boards will operate with significantly fewer trustees than boards in the south. But given the tremendous size of northern Ontario school boards, some of which will be larger in area than the country of France, how on earth are you going to ensure the access and accountability of trustees that all northern Ontario residents are entitled to?

But more than that, let's consider the problem that arises when you amalgamate rural boards with urban boards. Manitoulin and Espanola are being merged with Sudbury; North Shore, Chapleau, Michipicoten and central Algoma with Sault Ste Marie; and so on all across northern Ontario, rural boards being swallowed up by boards that are largely urban in nature. How can you realistically expect to protect the rights and interests of rural students when, in order to be truly democratic, the majority of trustees on these boards will inevitably represent voters in urban communities?

1140

The task force for school board reduction's final report, often called the Sweeney report, a report that Bill 104 purports to be based on, took a very different view of school board amalgamation. One of the most important

criteria used in the Sweeney report was that of contiguity — the amalgamation of boards that were not only neighbours but whose constituents shared similar needs. To quote, "Even with a reduction in the number of trustees and administrators, the amalgamation of two or more similar boards will not only result in savings but will meet the needs of students more efficiently." Rural was merged with rural. Why, then, after the Sweeney report placed such importance on amalgamating similar boards, does Bill 104 strive to amalgamate urban with rural?

The problems faced by rural schools are very different than those faced by urban schools. The needs of rural and urban students are not the same. You cannot mix the two and expect both to remain intact. The Sweeney report recognized this; Bill 104 does not. Rural students are not just some kind of special interest group that can be shoved under the carpet and ignored. We have rights too, and those rights need to be protected. Democracy at the local level must be preserved.

I applaud the minister's goal to provide equality of educational opportunity to all Ontario students. No Ontario student should be disadvantaged by where they live. Rural students deserve an education that is just as diverse and challenging as that offered our urban counterparts.

But let us look at how school boards might try to achieve educational equality for students in rural areas. Two days ago, the Sudbury Board of Education voted seven to three to close Capreol High School. The board is attempting to improve the quality of education for Capreol students by busing them to city high schools, where they will have a wider curriculum and more educational resources. This is consistent with the current trend towards centralization of services under the guise of improving quality. But are you really improving the quality or just making the system more cost-effective? If financial savings exist, are they really worthwhile?

Canada is not by nature an urban country. We treasure our small towns and our small-town way of life. While transporting students to urban centres may seem to make more sense from an educational and a financial point of view, it is also an affront to the traditional Canadian small-town lifestyle. I am small-town student. I have a right to an education in a small-town environment, in a small-town school, with all the benefits and disadvantages that entails. By shoving rural schools and rural students into a board that is dominated by urban interests, a very important part of Canadian culture is at risk of being lost. Bill 104 casts into doubt the future of northern Ontario's small, rural schools.

An even bigger concern I have with Bill 104 is the establishment of the Education Improvement Commission, whose co-chairs were appointed before the bill even passed first reading. It is this commission that will have ultimate say over how our school boards spend our tax dollars. It is this commission that will decide the fate of our present school boards' assets during amalgamation, assets that were raised on the backs of local taxpayers for the funding of local education. These are only a few of the roles this commission can perform, this non-democratically-appointed commission, this commission that is accountable to no one except itself.

What you're essentially saying in this bill is: "Trust us. Trust us that the Education Improvement Commission will

manage your boards efficiently. Trust us that there will be enough money to adequately fund education. Trust us that you will get all the trustees you need. Trust us that the quality will improve and that all our students will be taken to the head of the class. Trust us."

But where is the evidence that our trust would be justified? As our education minister is so fond of pointing out, we are not the first jurisdiction in Canada or in the world to reform its education system. Indeed, this bill and the government's plans are basically identical to the educational reforms brought in by Britain five years ago. They amalgamated local education authorities; they removed education funding from the municipal tax base; they brought in a rigorous common curriculum; they brought in standardized testing; and they improved accountability to parents by publishing exam results. They strove to improve the quality of their educational system and to take students to the head of the class.

But what has happened since then? Five years later, the number of private schools is blossoming. Private schools dominate the tables of exam results, while state-funded schools struggle far behind. Millions of pounds have been spent on curriculum reform, but they are still looking for a curriculum that will actually work. More and more high school students are achieving high grades in final-year exams, but they are less prepared for university than ever as the exams are getting easier and easier year by year. Educational standards are declining. Recent standardized testing of 11-year-olds showed that in only 12 out of 14,500 primary schools did all students reach the level expected of typical 11-year-olds. The highest scores were achieved in affluent suburban schools and the lowest in inner-city schools. The test results seem to suggest that there are factors influencing student performance other than just curriculum, assessment and accountability.

In short, the performance of British students has not been enhanced under the government's reform package. The students have not gone to the head of the class. Here we are, heading down what appears to be the same path. Why, then, does this bill deserve our trust?

American philosopher and progressive education advocate John Dewey once said that the end justifies the means only when the means are such as actually bring about the desired and desirable end. I agree that Ontario's education system is in need of reform. However, I cannot in any confidence say that Bill 104 will meet the needs of Ontario's students and take them to the head of the class. This bill does not contain the means to bring about the desired and desirable end.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Thank you very much for coming. You said at the end there that you think, you thought and you know that change needs to be made. What are your suggestions, if not Bill 104?

Ms Boardman: My suggestions for northern Ontario in particular are that we need to consider boards on a case-by-case basis when establishing trustees. This is something the Sweeney report recommended. We'll need more trustees simply because of the size of the school boards and the diversity of the population in them. We have situations, such as was mentioned earlier about Manitoulin, where you have large native populations and they need to be represented.

Mr Michael Brown: Thank you, Megan. I think you're the first OAC student we've had talking to us, at least today, and we're most proud to have someone come from Espanola.

You're aware, as we're all aware, and I believe Ms Field from the Manitoulin Women Teachers' Association pointed this out, that the five boards, the four boards of Manitoulin, Espanola, the North Shore and Central Algoma, plus the separate board, had formed a co-op.

Ms Boardman: Yes.

Mr Michael Brown: The Espanola board and the North Shore board are even sharing directors of education and business operators. So there have been huge efficiency increases within those five rural boards, the boards that were going to be amalgamated. As a student in Espanola High School, are you finding that the availability of good, solid curriculum and teaching has been your experience?

Ms Boardman: Yes. I think I have received a very good quality of education at Espanola High School. I think it has been a challenging education. I have not only benefited from a good in-class education but a good extracurricular education. I have participated in sports teams, as I mentioned.

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Mr Michael Brown: You probably played against my daughter.

Ms Boardman: I'm the editor of the school newspaper. For a small northern Ontario town, we have a very wide range of high-quality in-class and out-of-class activities. The cooperative you mentioned has worked reasonably well simply because we are similar boards with similar interests.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much, Ms Boardman. I have a question for you and then I have a question for the government following on your presentation, which was certainly an indication that if you're a good example, then education is not broken in this province.

Ms Boardman: Thank you.

Mr Wildman: The Sweeney report recommended that your board, the Central Algoma board and the Manitoulin board be amalgamated because they were similar boards with similar numbers of students, with similar distances involved and they had worked together on curriculum in the past. You also played against each other in sports and so on. Do you think that would have been a better solution, if there were going to be amalgamations, to amalgamate those boards rather than combine your board and Manitoulin with Sudbury and Central Algoma with Sault Ste Marie and a number of other boards in Algoma?

Ms Boardman: Yes, by far, because we are similar boards with similar interests and with similar problems. As I mentioned earlier, the needs of rural and urban students are very different, and schools in rural and urban areas face very different problems. I really am concerned that by amalgamating our two rural areas with Sudbury we may end up playing second fiddle behind the urban interests; 80% of the students in that board would be in the Sudbury area, and we'd be the mere 20% off in the other area. I'm very concerned about that.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Boardman. On behalf of the committee, I want to thank you for your very thoughtful presentation. May I say on a personal note that you are a

high testament to the quality of education in this province, and I encourage you to continue with your civic participation.

Mr Wildman: I have a question for the parliamentary assistant following on Ms Boardman's presentation. Since many members of the government party have made it clear that they're following through on proposals that were made by Mr Sweeney, could the government please explain why in this case they did not follow the recommendation with regard to these boards?

Mr Skarica: I don't have that explanation handy at this time, Mr Wildman, but I can make further enquiries for you.

ONTARIO BUSINESS COLLEGE, SUDBURY

The Chair: Could I have the Ontario Business College come forward, please, Jacquie Williamson. Dean Williamson, it's a pleasure to see you.

Ms Jacquie Williamson: Thank you Madam Chair and members of the Committee. My name is Jacquie Williamson, and I am the dean of the Ontario Business College here in Sudbury. The Ontario Business College is a province-wide institution which has provided career training to the citizens of Ontario for over 125 years. I am here today representing the Ontario Business College to offer our input and suggestions to the necessary process of change in education in Ontario and specifically on Bill 104.

Business and residential taxpayers can't afford to keep paying for the ever-increasing costs of school boards. I understand that over the last 10 years school boards have increased residential and business taxes by an average of 5% every year. That's a 50% increase. No salaries have increased by anywhere near that amount over the last 10 years. Business profits, for those few small companies that have profits, certainly have not increased by 50% over the last 10 years. In fact, those small businesses which have survived have done so by doing more with less, by cutting costs wherever they can just to stay in business or just to keep from laying off staff.

On the other hand, some school boards didn't even notice that Ontario has been suffering through the worst recession in more than 50 years over the last 10 years. During that time, total enrolment at Ontario schools has increased only 16% while school board spending has increased by 82% and school taxes have gone up by more than 120%. Any business that budgeted like that during the recession has now gone bankrupt. Only government and taxpayer-funded school boards have continued to raise taxes while the economy has been suffering in the real world. It's time to get school board spending under control, and that's what Bill 104 will do. It will also force school boards to redirect their spending of tax dollars into the classroom, where it should be spent.

We understand that last year across the province almost 80% of school boards continued to increase property taxes while the provincial government was cutting its own spending and urging school boards to do the same. Most school boards didn't get the message. The province is broke. Any spending on new programs must be borrowed from the United States or Europe and eventually repaid by taxpayers. But at the local level, school boards are prevented from borrowing; they just raise taxes. But it's all the

same taxpayer, and the limits of how much people and business can pay in taxes has been reached.

School boards and government must now do the same as businesses and families have been doing for the last ten years, they must do more for less and redirect tax money to pay for the most important part of education, classroom teaching. Education spending must be accountable and well managed. Last year Ontario spent more than \$13 billion on elementary and secondary education. Hopefully, this bill will refocus resources where they belong, on the individual student in the classroom, and streamline administration by cutting the number of trustees by two thirds.

The existing 129 school boards in Ontario will be cut in half, to be replaced by 69 school boards. The number of trustees will be cut from 1,900 to about 700, with huge savings for the taxpayers. These trustees will no longer receive up to \$49,000 a year, more than most people earn in their full-time jobs. It's about time. There are more than enough elected officials being paid for by the taxpayer.

Just as businesses have had to make do with fewer managers over the last few years, now it's time for government to cut the number of elected politicians and school board trustees.

Another aspect of the bill that we support is the new criteria of qualification for trustees, which will reduce conflicts of interest. School board employees and their spouses will not be able to serve as trustees in any school board. This is a positive step.

Parents will have more input on major decisions affecting their children's education, such as programs the schools offer. Parents will now have a clear and consistent standard for what students should be learning and when and how that learning is funded.

Under Bill 104, local businesses like ours will continue to pay local taxes for education. We don't mind paying our fair share of education funding if the money is spent wisely and in a businesslike manner. School boards must start to treat every dollar they spend as if it was their own money, from their own family budget, because that's what it is. Families and businesses must budget to pay their taxes.

The tax money that goes to school boards must be treated with more respect. Just as a parent has to say no to a child that wants a new toy or the business owner who has to wait another year before he can afford a new delivery van, so too school boards must make do with what they have.

Taxpayers have seen their taxes rise as school boards have built elaborate administrative centres across Ontario, new offices that very few taxpaying businesses could afford. But school boards are tax spenders, not taxpayers. I also understand that one school board even has an ownership interest in a golf course.

Even the previous NDP government and its former Treasurer, Mr Laughren from outside Sudbury, learned that there are limits to how much government can tax and spend.

As part of this process, the government intends to establish a commission, which includes former NDP Minister of Education Dave Cooke, to ensure reforms take place in an organized and careful way. While Mr Cooke was in government, he learned that there is no bottomless pit of taxpayers' money. His experience in government makes him an ideal appointment to his new commission.

Taxpayers are concerned about the quality of education and the way education dollars are spent. Other jurisdictions in Canada have reduced duplication and waste and streamlined administration and bureaucracy. Ontario needs reform of the education system to focus resources on the classroom, where they belong, and to improve the quality of education at less cost to the taxpayer.

In the past, trustees also approved their own salary increases and severance packages. This led to several abuses of the system. Now is the time to act.

Because the new funding model is based on the needs of the students, it will help to refocus resources back on the classroom, where they belong.

A recent report on school board spending in 1995 and 1996 shows that some school boards spent as little as 51% of their money in the classroom. This report states that, on average, for every dollar spent on education, more than 80 cents was spent outside the classroom. Non-classroom spending must be reduced in order to maximize the resources focused on the classroom.

The Ontario Association of Career Colleges, which represents 181 private sector colleges across Ontario, is also concerned with the recent trend of school boards establishing career training centres for adults. These centres are using tax dollars which were earmarked for primary and secondary classroom education to subsidize the cost of operating these centres in direct competition with the 340 private sector vocational schools across the province. We believe that this issue needs to be looked at closely and that the following questions need to be asked and answered:

(1) Are school boards required to charge the public the full cost of training or the market cost of training that is also offered by private sector vocational schools?

(2) Are school boards permitted to divert funds received from the government and intended for other purposes, like classroom education, to cross-subsidize the fees charged for training courses that are also provided by private sector vocational schools?

(3) Are the full costs of all personnel, plant and equipment used to deliver training courses that are also offered by private sector schools properly charged against the budgets of similar training courses offered by school boards when they establish the fees they charge for these courses?

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Another important consideration is the tax status of these school-board-funded adult training centres.

Recently, Catherine Swift, the president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, wrote to the federal Minister of National Revenue on this matter. On behalf of CFIB's 40,000 member firms in Ontario, she asked for an interpretation of the GST status for not-for-profit and for-profit corporations created by Ontario's public school boards.

She said CFIB was concerned that non-profit creations, such as the Ontario Member School Board Corp, which includes 15 school boards in Ontario, and a for-profit corporation created by the Huron County Board of Education, are competing unfairly against existing private firms in both training and supply of other goods and services.

The CFIB has heard of school board staff working for these spinoff corporations while being paid to perform their

school board duties. They are concerned that these quasi-public corporations are not paying property or business taxes or PST.

This constitutes a significant unfair advantage for those school board corporations when competing with private firms that must pay these taxes. This unfair advantage could be enough to threaten the viability of existing private businesses and the future jobs of their employees. Tax spenders can only spend the taxes if there are enough taxpayers left to pay the taxes.

As an example of one of these spinoff corporations, on January 14 of this year the Peel Board of Education became a member of a new non-profit corporation of Ontario school boards. The new cooperative venture, called the Ontario Member School Board Corp, brings together 15 publicly funded school boards from Ontario. The Peel board director of education, Harold Braithwaite, was named the corporation's president.

More than a dozen school boards have already joined, including Brant county, Elgin county, Haldimand, Halton and Hamilton, just to mention a few. Other boards are expected to join over the next few months.

In the future, this spinoff corporation will arrange Visa affinity cards, school bus messaging and banking arrangements. Interestingly, Mr Braithwaite does not expect this bill will in any way restrict the workings of the corporation. That's a scary thought.

If Mr Braithwaite is correct, even more taxpayers' money will be diverted from classroom education to pay for adult training schools that will compete directly with the private sector. We think this practice must be stopped as soon as possible and the money redirected back into the classroom, where taxpayers think it's being spent now.

In summary, it's time for school boards to cut spending and to concentrate on their main job: classroom education for our children.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dean Williamson. We appreciate the time you've taken to come here and make your presentation. You used up all of your time.

Mr Wildman: I've got a question for the government. Following from the presentation, I would like to find out from the ministry if it has investigated the allegations that have been brought forward about the Huron county board, particularly since on this committee, Ms Johns, the local MPP, has made a very strong argument on how little money that board has.

Has the ministry investigated this and could the information be given to the members about this? Also, what is the government's position vis-à-vis the non-profit corporation that was referred to in the presentation involving publicly funded boards in the province that is chaired by the director of education for the Peel county board, the board from the minister's own riding?

Mr Skarica: Mr Wildman, I don't have that information but I'll forward it to the ministry to give you further details.

Mr Duncan: I wonder if the ministry would provide for us, on a board-by-board breakdown, mill rate increases for each of the last 10 years for education purposes compared to the consumer price index.

Mr Skarica: I'm not sure if that exists.

Mr Duncan: Actually, it does. We've done the research and what you'll find is that mill rate expenses have gone up a lot less than has been suggested by the government.

LO-ELLEN PARK SECONDARY SCHOOL COUNCIL

The Chair: Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School Council is next. Chair Hewitt, we're delighted to have you and your colleagues here. If you might introduce your co-presenters, you then will have 15 minutes to make your presentation.

Ms Mary Hewitt: There is our vice-chair, Louise Kirchhefer, and the secretary of our council, Lynda Olsen.

We would like to thank the standing committee for allowing us the opportunity to comment on Bill 104. Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School has a student population of 850. Our school district includes the south end of Sudbury and all of the communities along Highway 69 south to the French River. In good weather, many of these students, especially those in Killarney, travel at least an hour to school. Eighty-five per cent of our graduating class goes on to university.

Education, or the process of learning, is increasingly more important. More than ever before, students need post-secondary education or technological training to obtain meaningful employment.

We want our children to fulfil their intellectual, physical, moral and social needs as well as be competent in reading, writing, mathematics and problem-solving. There must also be flexibility within the system so that it can respond to the unique needs of children; for example, exceptional as well as special needs. We want the students to be challenged, to meet certain expectations. There should be a balance between these expectations and the student's needs.

We support any educational restructuring that will meet the needs and improve the outcomes for students. However, change for the sake of saving a dollar is at best questionable. We may have saved money with some recent changes, but at what cost? Increased class size diminishes the amount of time the teacher has to assist individual students. Change must proceed with the appropriate caution, thought and allotted time for proper implementation to ensure students' needs will be met.

Money spent on education in Ontario is a long-term investment in our future and will save money elsewhere. For example, on the average, it costs \$6,400 per year to educate a child. It costs over \$100,000 a year to incarcerate someone. Most young offenders are high school dropouts. We must not skimp on education.

Parents have the right to have input into their children's education. We believe that the school, the parents and the community working in collaboration will provide the best education for the children of Ontario.

The amalgamation of school boards: We agree that the amalgamation of the school boards may be beneficial in some areas, but with the new large geographic boards, staff will be required to travel great distances to personally assess classrooms and schools. They must be familiar with the needs of each school and community within their board so they will be able to make informed decisions. We expect there will be distance subsidies for administrative staff and trustees to travel throughout the large district school boards. Please remember that for five to six months a year, winter weather and icy roads make travel difficult and roads are often closed, resulting in many cancelled meetings and extended stays, causing ineffective use of board

employees' time. These unforeseen events will increase costs of operation in the north.

We see cost savings in such areas as administering payroll and ordering supplies. It is going to be difficult to attract staff and candidates for trusteeship, with the long distances, increased work load due to more students, more staff and more schools. Satellite offices could be a solution.

From section 335(3) we understand the Education Improvement Commission's job is to study, research and make recommendations to the minister for the purpose of overseeing the transition to the new system of governance.

We are very concerned with section 344(2): "The decisions of the Education Improvement Commission are final and shall not be reviewed or questioned by a court." We strongly recommend that this be removed from Bill 104. No commission, committee or group of people should be given the power to place them above the law. No commission, committee or group of people can be expected to have all the right solutions to all the problems. We ask that this commission establish a process which will allow, not only input from the stakeholders to advise the commission in making decisions and recommendations but to provide an opportunity to respond to the final recommendations.

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The proposed local education improvement committee must have a process to collaborate with teachers, board staff and parents as well as communities to allow them to respond to final decisions. We trust that parent representatives will be included on the local improvement committee. When will this committee be appointed? Who will choose the candidates? Can we hope this committee will be representative?

We also feel it is time that the government form a partnership with the teachers and school boards to work together to improve the education process in Ontario. After all, the teachers have to implement the guides and regulations stipulated by the government. Working together, using all of the resources available to both groups, could save money and create the best education system anywhere.

It is our understanding that school councils were formed so that parents would have an opportunity to share with school officials their views on what is happening in the school. Parents across the province are struggling to form and implement memorandum 122. The large geographic school boards with fewer administrative staff and fewer elected trustees will cause a downloading of responsibility to the school councils which are mandated advisory bodies of elected volunteers.

Because school councils are new, relatively unknown bodies, currently members are most likely to be former PTA, home and school or fund-raising volunteers. Many school council members who originally signed on are not prepared to take on such tasks as that the school councils are being asked to do. In many cases, the same people are overwhelmed by commitments. School council members, mostly moms, work full- or part-time, deal with household duties, elderly parents, children's extracurricular activities and, yes, even with our teenagers we are still involved. Already for many people there are not enough hours in the day.

The lack of parent volunteers and community representatives is one of the hurdles to getting a school council

started. At the secondary level in particular parents don't often know one another or all of the school staff. There are no funds to print brochures to reach out to the school community and its surrounding neighbourhood. School councils can have a budget. Where does it come from? We have no funds for printing materials for distribution to our own members and certainly our schools do not have funds to spare.

With all the changes going on, for example, the new funding model, secondary school reform and now amalgamation of school boards, we are being bombarded with tasks and have little time to deal with such issues as our constitution and school profile. To be credible and accountable, school councils need access to training and resources. There is a need for in-service workshops or seminars on consensus-building, team-building, networking and even how to chair meetings.

Section 335(3)(g), "Consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on the feasibility of strengthening the role of school councils over time," and section 335(3)(h), "Consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on the feasibility of increasing parental involvement in education governance": These two sections indicate increasing powers for the school councils. How do you legislate or further strengthen the advice of volunteers? Are we comfortable with the concept of being an advisory body and working with the school administration and staff? We don't want to take on duties of a person who is now being paid.

In conclusion, today you have given us the opportunity to share our views on Bill 104. Our school council has spent 40-plus hours reading, discussing and writing this brief — and by the way, this was done over the March break, which was supposed to be a holiday. My husband thinks he's married to Bill 104.

The Chair: So does mine.

Ms Hewitt: We hope you give our submission the consideration it deserves. It is our understanding that this bill will receive third and final reading on April 2 or 3, only five days after the standing committee on social development finishes the last hearing on March 25. Will there be time to review, assess and implement changes in response to the presentations? We hope these hearings are just not a waste of taxpayers' money.

Again, we are concerned that the proposed changes in education are occurring much too fast. There are too many unanswered questions. What are the guidelines for the school councils? What is the administrative structure for the new boards? What are the outcomes of the many proposed changes?

In the last 13 years there have been four changes of government in Ontario. Each government has instituted a number of major changes for education. We are tired of what seems to be change for the sake of change. We caution the government that education reform needs to be carefully thought out and planned to guarantee the needs of all students. If it is not carefully planned, it means wasted effort, wasted opportunities and perhaps an increase in social and financial burdens in the province of Ontario.

Your goals are worthy, but please slow down and do it correctly. Education is not just about buildings, salaries and textbooks; education is about children.

Mr Bartolucci: Thank you very much for a very excellent presentation. In answer to a couple of your questions, "Will there be enough time to review, assess and implement changes in response to the presentations?" I think not.

Earlier this morning we tried to pass two different resolutions: one which would allow for some more time, which was defeated by the government; to incorporate Bill 110 which addresses one of your concerns that you made at the very beginning of your presentation about class sizes, and again it was defeated by the government members.

I'm concerned that we're listening but not enough members of the committee are listening. The government should realize that this has to be a much slower process, as you've illustrated in your final statement.

Let's talk only about one section, about the education improvement committee — the commission; let's not go to the committees, let's go to the commission. You realize that's an awful lot of money being spent out of the classroom. What value do you see this commission having, if any? I'm not talking about the committees, I'm talking about the commission.

Ms Hewitt: Actually, I'm really not informed enough to make a decision on it. One of the biggest problems we have on school councils and parents is trying, first of all, to find out what information is out there and how to access it. I spent something like two full days on the phone calling around to principals, teachers, trustees and school boards and even your office and that's what it took to come up with this. So really I'm not prepared to respond to that.

Mr Bartolucci: Absolutely. Isn't that the fundamental flaw of Bill 104?

Ms Martel: Thank you to the three of you for taking the time to make this presentation and thank you to the other members of the council who spent a lot of time in preparation for it.

I see on page 3 you said, "We expect there will be distance subsidies for administrative staff and trustees to travel throughout the large school board." The bill doesn't say anything about that. The minister hasn't said anything about that. I don't think teleconferencing is the way to go, although I understand some government members have suggested that for northern Ontario. You can be sure that we will push for that because in northern Ontario, given the distances and the smaller number of trustees, it will be impossible for people to visit schools, and they should be visiting schools; they shouldn't be trying to do this by teleconference.

Why are you so worried that what might happen under this bill is that responsibilities and roles of trustees or current school board staff are going to be offloaded on to you?

Ms Hewitt: The whole problem with what's going on in education right now is that there's no explanation of how things are going to be accomplished. There's no detailed information. We're scared because we don't know what's coming. We just don't know.

Ms Martel: Are you concerned that there isn't a whole lot of meat, so to speak, to this bill that would give you any of that indication?

Ms Hewitt: Like we've said, we want to know more about what's coming down. We want detailed guidelines,

information and outcome. We want to see the research. Is the curriculum in place for the changes for the secondary school reform?

Mr Skarica: We've heard a number of presentations, both from people who are supportive of Bill 104 and people who are critical of it, that they feel that in principle amalgamation of school boards can be beneficial. You also make the statement, "We agree that the amalgamation of school boards may be beneficial in some areas." Could you elaborate? What do you mean by that? Where would you think amalgamation of school boards would be beneficial?

Ms Hewitt: Earlier this morning, the young lady from Espanola indicated that the Espanola board and the North Shore appear already to be amalgamating and sharing services, so that would be a logical group to put together for amalgamation to save costs. But when you have distances of eight hours to travel across a school board district, I think that is excessive. You have to look at what is common to a group and put them together.

The Chair: Chair Hewitt, Ms Kirchhefer, Ms Olsen, thanks very much for being here today. We appreciate it.

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As the Sudbury Board of Education comes forward, I would like to tell the members of the government caucus that I am quite capable of chairing a meeting. If I wish your advice, I will certainly avail myself of it. Let's move on.

Mr Jordan: Thank you very much. There'll be no charge.

Interjections.

The Chair: I'm referring to the constant advice I get from that side of the table.

SUDBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: I call upon the Sudbury Board of Education. Welcome. We are looking forward to your presentation. Ms Dewar, I wonder if you might present your co-presenter.

Mrs Doreen Dewar: Yes, I will. My name is Doreen Dewar and I'm currently chair of the Sudbury Board of Education. My partner is Ernie Checkers, who I think most of you know, and who is the past chair of the Sudbury Board of Education. By the way, he asked me to mention that he was chair of a board when over 30 school boards were amalgamated in 1968. My goal in life is to become as notoriously protective of education for kids as Ernie is.

I just want to let you know that it took 12 phone calls and I spoke to seven different people to get a spot here today, but I believe we have extremely relevant ideas and I thank you for this opportunity.

Will Bill 104 improve our education system? That is the complex question that must be answered by the Ministry of Education and Training, politicians, federations, school councils, bureaucrats and trustees. The minister has said that changes incorporated in Bill 104 will result in classroom improvements, and I ask you to check out appendix A, which is a letter from the minister.

But, we ask, will this in fact happen? How will these improvements actually take place? Trustees of the Sudbury Board of Education were not elected to save money. We were elected to oversee the education of children, and as such we are in favour of anything that will improve education. If Bill 104 does not improve education, it is a fiasco. If it does improve education, we are for it.

Bill 104 reduces the number of school boards. That in itself is not necessarily bad. The main criticism of Bill 104 is that the democratic process will be lost with the formation of the Education Improvement Commission. This commission has far-reaching powers, and because it is appointed, not elected, it is accountable to the minister, not to the people. However, buried within Bill 104 is the provision for the EIC to appoint local education improvement committees.

Recently Dave Cooke and Ann Vanstone, co-chairs of the EIC, indicated that school boards should elect local education improvement committees. Bill 104 states that the EIC may delegate any of its powers and duties to the committees. Local education improvement committees made up of locally elected trustees will serve to dispel the myth that basic democratic rights are being removed with the passage of Bill 104.

Perhaps the greatest single failing of Bill 104 is not what it has, but what it has not. The following are some of the critical issues and questions which need to be addressed as expeditiously and coherently as possible, always with the single goal being the improvement of education.

We have personnel issues. It is essential that the government give school boards the tools to implement Bill 104 where personnel issues are concerned. School boards cannot pass legislation; only the government can do that.

(1) We need a legislated process to harmonize collective agreements of the various boards that will form the new district school boards.

(2) We need a legislated process to ensure that the cost of this harmonization does not exceed the current cost of all collective agreements.

(3) Currently, there are different unions representing the same classification of employee groups at various boards. A legislated process is required to determine which unions will represent the various employee groups in the new district school boards.

(4) Will there be staffing formulas for non-teaching groups to be adhered to by the new district school boards? If so, when will these formulas be available to use by the local education improvement committees?

(5) Will the province fund severance pay packages for employees displaced by the amalgamation process? If so, what are the details?

(6) Will the province consider implementing an early retirement package for non-teaching employees to reduce redundancies?

Now we go on to questions concerning trustee representatives:

(1) Will the total number of trustees be determined for the new district school boards?

(2) Will the Education Improvement Commission consider amendments to the total number of trustees for boards with large geographical areas?

(3) Can local education improvement committees determine the method of allocating the trustees of the new district school board or will there be prescribed formula, such as population or geography?

Good intentions and legislation are not enough. Improved education often comes down to solving one problem: funding. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to come to the conclusion that we are consistently faced with the

challenge of delivering quality education with limited resources. Cuts to education in the last one and a half years are no better or worse than cuts made in the previous four years. Let's face it, if we had unlimited funding, the governance model, namely Bill 104, would not be relevant.

Bill 104, however, does afford an ideal opportunity to improve funding with no increased cost to taxpayers. Since Bill 104 removes funding from the local tax levy, it is an ideal time for the government to make changes to the fiscal year. Regardless of the funding formula that is used, March, April, or May is too late to announce grants to school boards. Boards have spent half their annual budget by June. It is too late to alter budgets or make spending cuts. Currently, all adjustments must therefore be made as of September of the current budget year and shortfalls must be accounted for in the brief four-month period from September to December.

Bill 104 gives the government an opportunity to change the fiscal year, which, without additional costs, can provide for better management and increased savings. Our provincial grants, whatever they are, must be effective from September to August to coincide with our school year structure in order to result in improved education.

A second funding consideration is based on the fact that in Ontario we have vast differences between urban and rural communities. The minister has placed equality of education as a priority. I draw your attention to a map we had produced in the Sudbury area before, but it's still very relevant. This is the current Sudbury Board of Education jurisdiction superimposed on southern Ontario. You can see what happens. The distances are phenomenal.

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Also, the population density in terms of pupil population is quite different in northern Ontario compared to southern Ontario. To bridge the gap created by geographical distances, northern Ontario needs technological equipment, but technological equipment is not enough. Allocations for distance education must be incorporated into the funding.

We currently have students who travel from Killarney to Sudbury for one and a half hours one way. Imagine being 14 years old and spending three hours a day, five days a week, approximately 200 days a year, on a bus. The cost of transporting students could be termed, and I worry about this, an out-of-classroom expenditure, but for Northern Ontario students it means getting to class. Any proposed funding model must address this relevant issue. If you look at the map, you can see why northern Ontario educational problems cannot be solved with southern Ontario solutions.

In a letter to the Sudbury Board of Education, the Minister of Education and Training said, "The profile of your cost reductions" — that's us, the Sudbury Board of Education — "since 1992 could be a model for other very large boards in the province."

Although we appreciate the kind words and the pat on the back from the minister, we would like to suggest something more concrete. We suggest that fiscal responsibility should be rewarded. The ministry should challenge the new district boards to adopt innovative education delivery practices by offering incentives. For example, for every surplus dollar at the end of the fiscal year, the ministry could award a bonus. This bonus could be designated by the ministry for specific educational purposes.

In closing, the Sudbury Board of Education has provided within this brief three funding suggestions, we have listed essential legislative changes, and we have demonstrated the accountability inherent in the democratic process. Although opposing political parties would have us believe that Bill 104 heralds the death of democracy and the ruination of education, we have shown ways and means for all partners in education to maintain, perhaps even surpass, the high expectations we deservedly place on education in the province of Ontario. Now let's get on with it.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much. I'm looking at your map of your current board superimposed on southern Ontario. For the new proposed board, a map of it would go as far as Montreal, would it not?

Mrs Dewar: No, no. Actually, for the Sudbury Board of Education, the new district board, which is simply the English-language section of the current board, would join up with the English-language section of Manitoulin and Espanola.

Mr Wildman: If you were going to superimpose it on southern Ontario, it would go as far as Ottawa and Montreal.

Mrs Dewar: It has to go up, yes.

Mr Wildman: It would go up towards North Bay.

Mrs Dewar: Yes, it would.

Mr Wildman: With this kind of area, are you going to be able to properly serve the small outlying communities and the students from those communities, do you think, as a trustee?

Mrs Dewar: I'm going to refer back to these local education improvement committees. We have already met with both the Espanola and the Manitoulin Island boards. We are setting up committees. We are working together. We don't know what their specific problems and educational needs are, but they're going to tell us and we're going to work together. If we have the legislation in place to do it — and that's up to you people to make sure we get that — we can work together. They will know their needs and requirements for their students and we can do it.

Mr Skarica: I found your brief quite fascinating and your presentation excellent. You gave us some excellent, positive, constructive points to work on.

You indicate on page 1 that there's a myth that basic democratic rights are being removed by Bill 104. I note that subsection 338(1) of the bill indicates: "The Education Improvement Commission shall develop and implement a process for establishing education improvement committees." How do you see that working, now that you've met with Mr Cooke and Ms Vanstone?

Dr Ernie Checkeris: As a matter of fact, it's a logical thing to do. It happened 29 years ago. When the reorganization from some 1,500-odd boards to 170 boards was made, we had no legislative help. As a matter of fact, in this area several boards endeavoured to get rid of their surpluses by providing more resources and things for their particular schools before the amalgamation. They didn't want to share those resources, which is fair ball. As a result, we had to serve injunctions against these boards to prevent them from doing that.

It's logical to me to have a commission, and I assume it will be legislated eventually, that will oversee that sort of thing so it doesn't happen. It's like you require a police

force, because boards are humans and boards act that way and they have a tendency to be a little selfish and protective of their particular seats and so forth and so on. So there has to be something like that. The commission may have been ill-thought-out the way they did it, but eventually I would assume there will be legislation to cover that. You have to protect the dollars that are supposed to be spent on kids, and in the end I think it will all wash out. It did 30 years ago.

Mrs McLeod: I wish the dollars being spent on kids were going to be protected, although it worries me when the government's own assessment of how they're going to save money in amalgamation includes taking \$9.9 million directly out of school classroom equipment and supplies.

The Ernst and Young study, the study that addresses the savings in amalgamation, says very clearly that amalgamation can lead to an increase in costs because of the harmonization costs of both salaries and services. You've touched on the salary issue. I want to ask you about the service issue as a northern group.

We heard yesterday in Thunder Bay — and I think this is crucial to understand — from the small boards that are going to be amalgamated with larger, what we in the north consider to be, urban boards. The cost of providing less service in those small northern boards is greater than the cost of providing more service in the urban board, and you know the reasons why. My concern is, how do you then harmonize the costs?

Let me assume that's true for Espanola, that it costs more to provide less service in Espanola than it costs to provide more service in Sudbury. So the ministry decides, what's a fair funding formula now that they take over 100% of the costs? Even now, they protect the Sudbury level of funding. How does the new Sudbury board extend equity of service to the kids in Espanola with the funding you've got in Sudbury?

Mrs Dewar: We don't have the figures —

The Vice-Chair (Mr Dwight Duncan): I'm afraid you've got no time to answer. I apologize.

Mrs Dewar: Oh, I want to answer, though. Come on.

The Vice-Chair: If we have unanimous consent in the committee.

Mr Jordan: Agreed.

The Vice-Chair: All right, if it's agreed, fair enough. Go ahead.

Mrs Dewar: I'll try to keep it really brief. I told you, we do have to work together. We don't have all the figures from these other boards. We met, though, and that's what we're going to do; we're going to take a look at the figures. I don't think anybody can justify the fact that currently we have 28 trustees — 14 Espanola trustees, 14 Manitoulin Island trustees — servicing less than 4,000 kids, and in Sudbury we have 12 trustees taking care of 16,000 kids. Now, that's just the trustees.

Let's take a look at some of those other things you're talking about, the actual deliverance of education costs. Those trustees will know what their requirements are and we're going to work with them to make sure that what they say the kids require, we will do our best to do as one board. But we do need the legislation.

Interjections.

Mr Wildman: That's not what you did in Capreol.

Mrs Dewar: Yes, we did it in Capreol, sir.

Interjections.

The Vice-Chair: Order. Thank you very much for your presentation. I appreciate it. I'll recognize Mrs McLeod, on —

Mrs McLeod: It is a question for the parliamentary assistant to place to the minister.

Interjections.

The Vice-Chair: Order. I've recognized Mrs McLeod on a point of order. Order. We're now running more than half an hour behind. There are delegations waiting to be heard.

Interjection.

The Vice-Chair: Ms Martel, please. I understand Mr Skarica has a point of order.

1240

Mr Skarica: My point of order is: I think it's inappropriate for any of the members — the government side and the opposition side — to berate the deputants. I think they have a right to their opinion and they shouldn't be berated.

Mr Wildman: Chair, I apologize. I was just speaking out for the people in Capreol.

The Vice-Chair: I think we all need to remind ourselves that these are controversial issues.

Mrs McLeod: My question is for the parliamentary assistant. As you'll remember, yesterday it was indicated that the EIC had told a group outside of this committee that salaries would be essentially protected, that the same contracts that now exist would be protected under the amalgamated boards. That came as a surprise to us and we asked whether that was ministry policy. You undertook to determine whether that was.

Today we've heard another new piece of information which is that the EIC has said that it will be possible to elect local EICs. There is nothing in the legislation that suggests that. In fact I think it is directly contrary to the wording in the legislation, which speaks of the EIC appointing local committees. I would ask again, Mr Skarica, if you would determine whether this is to be an amendment from the government to the legislation in accordance with what the EIC is apparently telling people should happen.

Mr Skarica: I heard that. I was going through the act and it seems to be totally consistent with subsection 338(1) which leaves it up to the commission to develop and implement the process for establishing the education improvement committees. So it seems to be consistent with the legislation.

Mrs McLeod: So there will be a process of election and this will be the government's position, that —

The Vice-Chair: Could we ask the government to respond to this question in writing so that we can get on with the delegations?

Mr Skarica: Yes, I'll respond to that.

CHAPLEAU, NORTH SHORE, MICHIPICOTEN
AND SAULT STE MARIE DISTRICTS
ROMAN CATHOLIC
SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARDS

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the Sault Ste Marie District Roman Catholic Separate School Board, William Struk and Mike Sheehan. You have 15 minutes

beginning now, including your presentation and any time you choose to leave for questions and answers.

Mr Mike Sheehan: My name's Mike Sheehan. I'm the vice-chairman of the board. To my left is the director of education.

Due to work commitments and the distance the chairs of the four boards to be amalgamated in our region would have to travel, they are unable to be here today for this presentation. Since I'm retired, it was their opinion that the six-hour return trip should be my lot. But I should be thankful. If I resided in Wawa, the return trip would be 12 hours, 11 hours of which would occur within the suggested boundaries of the amalgamated new board. Were I from Chapleau, the time would be dependent upon whether the sun or the snowplows were out.

Bill 104's effect on our region of Ontario is to combine four existing boards into one new larger board. The boards which would be affected by the amalgamation are the Chapleau, Michipicoten, North Shore and Sault Ste Marie separate school boards. None of these boards are contiguous. In fact great distances separate the boards from each other at present. The Michipicoten separate school board is approximately 240 kilometres north of the Sault Ste Marie separate school board, which in turn is 160 kilometres west of the closest part of the North Shore separate school board. The Chapleau separate school board is approximately 240 kilometres northeast of the Sault board. These boards have over the years developed their own educational systems to meet the needs of their local students and populations.

To the trustees and school supporters in these four boards, the concept of amalgamation does not make sense. They see no positive gain. Instead they see a loss of local representation and autonomy. There has been much talk on the part of the government that the amalgamation of boards will save money. Research carried out by the Royal Commission on Learning shows that this is not the case and there are no real savings resulting from amalgamation of school boards. Where savings may occur in some areas, additional costs may rise in other areas, and they definitely will in ours.

Based on enrolment, all four of these boards are small when compared to the rest of the school boards in Ontario. The administration costs are already low, and the statement by the government that there are many dollars that can flow from savings in administrative costs to the classroom is simply not valid in this area.

We feel it is important to reiterate to the committee that the people in this area see no value to the proposed amalgamation of the four boards into one new larger board. However, the trustees also realize that the government is set on amalgamations occurring across the province, and in an attempt to minimize the damage to our educational systems, we would like to make the following recommendations.

With Bill 104, the four existing school boards which I have mentioned will be combined into one board which will stretch 650 kilometres from west to east and 240 kilometres from south to north. To put this into a southern Ontario perspective, this is the distance from Windsor to Kingston from west to east and from Toronto to Parry Sound from south to north. The new board created in our area would be equal in size to two thirds of all of southern

Ontario. The enrolment within this new English-language separate school board would be approximately 8,400 students.

This amalgamation would result in one of the larger school boards in Ontario in geographic size but one of the smaller of the 55 new major boards based on enrolment. Bill 104 states that the number of trustees on the new school boards would vary from five to 12 trustees. Based on the enrolment of the new board in our area, the number of trustees would probably be closer to five than 12. However, due to the geographical size of the new board, we strongly feel that the number of trustees should be the maximum number identified in Bill 104, that being 12 trustees.

We feel it is imperative that parents and other school board supporters of the new board should have local representation on the new board and not be faced with the fact that their nearest trustee may live a hundred kilometres or so away. Even with 12 trustees, the contact between the people in an area and their local trustee will be dramatically reduced from the present situation. To have fewer than 12 trustees elected to the new board would severely curtail local involvement of the people with their school board. This involvement of people with their school boards is what makes these boards responsive to the needs of the students and parents in their local area. Bill 104 will reduce this involvement. However, we ask the ministry and the government to do all that is possible in the act to minimize this loss of involvement. In our case, as we have stated, this would mean providing for 12 trustees for the new board in our area.

As well as determining the number of trustees to be elected to each board, Bill 104 also enables the ministry to determine boundaries of the electoral zones in which trustees will be elected. While it might be easy to assign a specific number of trustees in our case to the city of Sault Ste Marie, it would be much more difficult to work out equitable electoral zones in the vast area encompassed by the new board outside the city. If the determination of these electoral zones is to be carried out by ministry staff situated in Toronto, we strenuously object. Staff located in Toronto would have no conception of the regional affiliation of people in the areas being amalgamated. Electoral boundaries determined in Toronto could cross clearly defined lines of regional affiliation and lead to much discontent among the people in the region.

Once the total number of trustees is determined by the government for the new board as well as for the area outside the city of Sault Ste Marie, we would recommend that the present existing school boards be given an opportunity to recommend to the government what the new electoral boundaries should be. In this manner local input on a sensitive political issue will be obtained before decisions are made.

The area covered by the new board will include eight first nations. Two of the four boards involved in the amalgamation have first nation representatives on their boards for a total of three representatives. We would strongly recommend that the first nations be represented on the new board to address the needs of native students and that the representatives be in place when the new board comes into effect on January 1, 1998.

Our recommendations, which I refer to in this section, are: That the Ministry of Education and Training take into consideration the geographic size of the new amalgamated board and provide for the election of 12 trustees to the new board; that the Ministry of Education and Training provide the opportunity for local input in the determination of electoral zones for the new board; and that the Ministry of Education and Training ensure appropriate first nation representation on the new school board.

In conjunction with the announcement of Bill 104, the Honourable John Snobelen announced the reform of educational finance whereby educational funding in Ontario will become a provincial responsibility and there will be no more residential taxation to support financing school boards. Bill 104 creates an entity called the Education Improvement Commission which will have the power to closely monitor and approve school board expenditures for some time to come.

1250

Separate school boards in Ontario have been underfunded for many, many years and the minister's announcement that equal funding for students, regardless if they are separate school or public school students, is welcomed and long overdue news. Because of the underfunding of separate schools, we would call on the government to initiate this equal funding for the 1998 fiscal year and stress that the funding be equal from the date of the introduction of the new funding model. Too often in the past, when the ministry has improved funding or access to assessments for separate schools, these changes have been phased in over a number of years to the detriment of separate schools. It is time to forgo the phasing-in concept and begin to immediately fund all students in Ontario equally.

Presently school boards enjoy local autonomy in funding their educational programs. Based on ministry requirements and local needs, boards prioritize their various programs and services and fund them accordingly. This method has placed the decision-making of the board close to its local population and has allowed school boards to be responsive to these local needs. These needs vary across the province. Bill 104 removes this local autonomy of school boards to determine their own priorities and fund them accordingly. The Education Improvement Commission will have the right to monitor expenditures and require boards to make changes to their budgets if the commission so deems.

Also of great concern to us are the indications coming from the Ministry of Education and Training that funds for education will come in the form of envelopes. By this is meant that the ministry will determine how many dollars will be given to support each specific program within a board's budget. If this is the case, it would remove the local autonomy of school boards across the province to fund programs according to local needs. There would be little or no flexibility for boards to respond to the priorities of their communities if these priorities were different from those of the ministry.

The imposition of such envelope funding would indicate a lack of faith on the part of the ministry and the government in school boards to carry out their duties in a responsible and effective manner. In effect, it would be said that

the ministry and the government know what is best for everyone everywhere in the province, and that the ministry and the government do not trust the locally elected trustees to do what is best for the students in their local areas. It is our strong recommendation that the concept of envelope funding should not occur and the operation of school boards should be left to the elected trustees.

In the past, the ministry has utilized incentive grants to assist school boards in financing specific programs which the ministry felt should have high priority, for example, special education and the GEM student computer program. The ministry should continue to utilize such programs in its new funding model for education without curtailing a board's local autonomy. This local autonomy should be protected by amendments to the act that clearly state this fact.

Catholicity in the school system: The purpose of the Catholic separate school system in Ontario is to teach the Catholic faith and gospel values to the students entrusted to it on a voluntary basis by Catholic school supporters. Over 600,000 students attend separate schools in the province and this number continues to grow, a strong indication of the support by the Catholic community in Ontario of the separate school system. It is therefore vitally important to us that the rights of Catholics, guaranteed in the Constitution, be in no manner reduced or limited due to the educational changes being introduced by the government.

In order to ensure these rights, we would like to address the following issues: It is imperative that the Education Improvement Commission, and any education improvement committee created by the commission, have members who are fully cognizant of the Catholic separate school system in Ontario. According to Bill 104, the commission and its committees will have important roles to play in education in Ontario. It is therefore important that the members of the commission and committees have members who are knowledgeable about Catholic education and the needs of separate school boards.

It would be insufficient for the commission and the committees to rely upon outside sources for knowledge and information. We recommend that the minister, in appointing members to the commission, and the commissioners, in appointing members to the committees, ensure that adequate representation exists on these bodies to represent the needs of the separate school system in Ontario.

Bill 104 does not speak of the staffing of schools per se, however regulations will certainly flow from Bill 104 and these regulations may address this issue. We would recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training ensure that there are no provisions in any amendments to Bill 104 or regulations flowing from Bill 104 to limit the right of Catholic separate school boards to hire Catholic teachers for their schools.

Presently the Ministry of Education and Training has responsibility for determining the curriculum of elementary and secondary schools in Ontario. Recently, due to severe financial cutbacks in the ministry, its role in curriculum development has been reduced and more work in curriculum development has fallen to school boards. In northern Ontario, the separate school boards have formed the Northern Ontario Catholic Curriculum Cooperative to do this work.

The curriculum materials developed in the past and currently being developed by the Ministry of Education are secular in nature and do not relate to the religious educational needs of a Catholic curriculum, which requires the gospel's values and Catholic beliefs to be integrated into every subject being taught. As it is the Ministry of Education and Training's responsibility to provide a curriculum for all students in Ontario, the needs of 600,000 students in the separate school system are not being fully met.

Over the years there have been many requests for the ministry to meet these needs. However, with the exception of one-time grants approximately four years ago to establish curriculum cooperatives, such as the one previously mentioned, no support has been provided by the ministry. We feel the ministry's support for the development of curriculum for Catholic schools is part of its mandate and this mandate should be honoured.

Support for the development of Catholic curriculum can be carried out in a number of ways. One option is the establishment of a curriculum unit within the ministry to take secular curriculum developed by the ministry and adapt it to Catholic schools. Another option is to fund the operation of the existing Catholic curriculum cooperatives in the province —

The Vice-Chair: You're down to one minute.

Mr Sheehan: One minute. I'd better skip, hadn't I? I was going to refer to the effects of the amalgamation of school boards on existing board employees. All I'll suggest is that hopefully the objective would be social justice and that injustice does not prevail when we amalgamate.

The magnitude of the planned amalgamations will require a great deal of work to be carried out by the existing boards. In northern Ontario a good deal of travelling will be involved, as well as staff and trustee time. Already in our area a number of meetings have been held and a good deal of time spent on telephone calls and faxes. Much staff time has also already been reassigned to meet the requirements of Bill 104.

All of this commitment of resources is being borne by the present boards and costs are beginning to mount. We would recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training immediately establish a transition fund to assist boards in implementing board amalgamations and that this fund continue into future years for these ongoing costs.

At the beginning of this brief the boards in this area stated their position regarding amalgamation of school boards, namely, that they did not see this as a positive initiative. Rather, the boards view this initiative as reducing local representation and involvement in the educational systems of Ontario. We are however appreciative of the opportunity provided by the government to our group and to others across Ontario to express our views on Bill 104. We thank you for your attention and interest in this presentation.

Since I'm representing four boards, do I get an hour?

The Vice-Chair: No, I'm afraid not. I wish you could. Thank you very much for your presentation, both Mr Sheehan and Mr Struk. I apologize for mispronouncing your names earlier. The entire presentation will be part of the official record as well. Even the parts that you had to skip over will be there.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL
TEACHERS' FEDERATION,
SUDBURY DISTRICT

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, Sudbury, Ken Collins, president.

Mr Ken Collins: Thank you very much, members of the committee, for being here to listen to our concerns and our input. Some of the things I'm going to be saying this afternoon will echo a number of the points brought up by Mrs Hewitt and our board chair, Mrs Dewar, and past chair, Dr Checkeris, so if there is a little bit of an overlap, please forgive me.

My name is Ken Collins and I'm an elementary teacher at Pinecrest Public School. It's located in Hanmer, just north of here. I've been teaching with the Sudbury Board of Education for nine years. I have four children currently enrolled in public elementary schools here in the system. One is in junior kindergarten, another is in grade 2, a third in grade 4, and my oldest is in grade 5. All of them are at Algonquin Road Public School. My wife is also an occasional teacher with the Sudbury Board of Education.

As well as this involvement, I am the president of the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, Sudbury District, and as you've probably already surmised, I have a tremendous personal stake in public elementary education in this province and I wouldn't be here addressing you unless I and many of the teachers I represent had some very strong concerns about the direction in which the government is taking education right now.

1300

The Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, Sudbury District, is comprised of some 125 statutory and voluntary teaching members. We're committed to improving education in all of the communities in which we have members, regardless of geographic size or proximity from large urban centres. We encourage change if the outcome is to improve educational conditions, teacher effectiveness and better learning environments and opportunities for children.

We believe that introducing Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, will have no positive impact on education as it affects us and indeed may very well erode much of the good work local boards are still carrying out despite steadily reduced funding over the last several years.

While we question the overall benefit of amalgamating school boards provincially, our, and particularly my, greatest objection is with the issue which will affect us most and that's the local merger of the Sudbury Board of Education with the Manitoulin and Espanola boards of education.

Distance and the differences in the various communities created by distances are issues of concern to both parents and teachers, the ones whom I've talked to anyway. There are several hundred kilometres between the most easterly school in the Sudbury board at Warren and the furthest school on Manitoulin Island at Gore Bay. A number of people who have already presented have illustrated these differences. I haven't gone into it in too much detail.

In good weather, the travelling time between these schools would be five and a half hours. During inclement weather, though, these communities would simply be

inaccessible. Even if board administration offices were centralized at Sudbury, visits to the outlying area schools by supervisory officers or trustees would be all-day events, highlighted largely by car travel, rarely conducted in the winter. One can only guess how much attention smaller outlying rural schools — and we've brought this up before — would receive should the amalgamated school board be created.

The question about whether the local school board will have meaningful decision-making authority too is rather uncertain. While trustees will be maintained, apparently, their role, it appears, will be greatly diminished. In an educational jurisdiction as large as Sudbury, and possibly later as large as Sudbury, Manitoulin and Espanola, local educational priorities and the tough decisions which must be made based on those priorities are currently the responsibility of the caring board trustees. However, there are considerations in Bill 104 which will undermine much of the local democratic control presently exercised at the board level.

Removing the greater part of financial control from the boards and placing it in the hands of the Education Improvement Commission will relegate the board to merely an advisory body. With so many unique social, economic and educational situations within the geographical area, there will be not a hint of the same kind of responsibility trustees are currently authorized to undertake, meaning the local will of the community will rarely be addressed.

For example, already in the Sudbury Board of Education we have students who are bused in excess of one hour to school and another hour or more home from school in some cases. We have used the example, with other speakers, of the distance having to be travelled to Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School from the southern reaches within the Sudbury Board of Education. There are also cases of the little tots at Wanup public school — this is according to Diana Haaranen, the principal — who have to travel the same amount of time; very tiny children, and they are on buses for in excess of one hour going to school in some cases and in excess of an hour going home again. That already exists in Sudbury. Does this amalgamation of school boards mean that more community schools will close and more children will be bused in order to save money? If saving money is the case at hand, then perhaps this would be a logical following. Take the local power away from the community representatives and these kinds of discriminating decisions can more easily be made.

The savings figure has been reported to be \$150 million if all aspects of Bill 104 were enacted. While fiscal responsibility is to be applauded, and we all agree with it, our concern is whether our local schools and children are able to enjoy any increased value from the education system if these changes are made. We believe the negative consequences will far outweigh the financial savings locally. I can't speak for the rest of the province, but locally this is how we feel.

We've heard how fiscally responsible the Sudbury Board of Education is, and it should be applauded. The Sudbury Board of Education has done a very good job in very difficult circumstances trying to cut its budget and trying to make do with the kinds of grants it's been given over the last few years. At the Sudbury Board of Education alone

the budget cuts have been enormous. These are changes which, through no stretch of the imagination, have had a profound impact on classrooms. I just list a number of these events so that you may think about them.

Teaching staff were reduced by 81 in 1996, that's last year, for this year. In elementary alone, 41 teaching positions were reduced out of a total of 551 the previous year, while enrolment over the same period of time increased from 8,926 to 8,950. So enrolment increased and the teaching staff, in elementary anyway, dropped by 41. Non-teaching staff were reduced by 54 in 1996.

In-school special education staffing was reduced by 50% at the beginning of this year, and starting next year it will be eliminated completely. All staffing for elementary guidance counsellors has already been eliminated. Use of occasional teachers has been dramatically reduced. The way it's done right now is that we're trying to save three days per teacher per school, and it's having a significant savings right now. One elementary school has been closed, the former Eden public school. Seven principals are in twinned school situations; 19 elementary schools are currently sharing principals. Secretarial time has been reduced.

Audio-visual technicians have been dramatically reduced and resources like educational media centre operate on a skeleton staff, at least skeleton in comparison to its former self, which was substantially better occupied. One educational psychometrist and a psychologist have been cut out, and elementary school budgets have been reduced by 10% right across the board. In 1996, the board of education budget slashed \$10 million out of its budget. It was almost \$140 million and it slashed \$10 million out.

Despite the promise that cuts to education will not affect students or the classroom, none of these cuts is without some impact on the child's learning. Is Bill 104 another fancy way to cut money at the expense of the children of this community? We think it is. The savings attributable to this legislation have no meaning to, for example:

The child who will have to spend hours on a bus. Will this number of children be increasing? We don't know. The bill doesn't address that.

Or the community whose school will have to close because it is too far away from urban centres and doesn't get the attention of the various individuals who will be making these kinds of decisions?

Or the frustrated trustees who will have no budget to implement the priorities they, as members of the community, know are needed?

Or the teacher whose board offices are so far away that they have only seen them in pictures and have no way to access the much-needed services?

This government keeps badgering education as the huge pit which sucks the province of all its resources. If education costs are too high in this province, we have to ask the question: As compared to what? Here are just a couple of bullets to chew on: The cost of education in Ontario is the same as it was in 1990 — that's provincial funding — but currently 12% more students are being educated.

Ontario taxpayers support two fully publicly funded education systems in both of which there is an English-language section and a French-language section. For this luxury, a premium must be paid. If you buy a Cadillac,

you've got to pay a Cadillac price. We have a Cadillac system. It isn't a broke system; it's an excellent system.

Ontario per pupil costs are \$165 higher than the national average because it includes things like educating adults, health and social services for at-risk students and English-as-a-second-language training for the large number of new Canadians who settle in Ontario urban centres. Ontario spends less per pupil, despite the fact that we have a higher average, than British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. While ministers Snobelen and Eves said that \$1 billion more was spent in education in 1995 than the national average, since then there has been a reduction from \$13.842 billion to \$13.11 billion.

1310

In summary, we recommend that the province reconsider its decision to further target education with its cost-cutting axe. Teaching children is not a business in which wholesale cuts and change can be swept into place. Changes, if not carefully considered, can result in disastrous consequences. If the province is interested in change for the improvement of educational opportunities to children, as Mrs Dewar said, then that particular legislation would likely be endorsed heartily by ourselves. But Bill 104 gives us no indication to believe that these changes are for the betterment of education, and the government's record so far is evidence that quality education is not a foremost consideration when developing educational policy.

Mr Beaubien: Mr Collins, thank you very much for your presentation. In your brief you point out, on page 2 I think it is, that teaching staff was reduced by 81 in 1996 and yet enrolment had gone up from 8,926 to 8,950, and you mentioned rationalization, the process. On the next page, you show that the cost of education in Ontario is the same as it was in 1990 but currently 12% more students are being educated.

On the page that I have in front of me, looking at the boards in this area, there are 29 boards. Out of 29, 25 show a decrease in enrolment; four of them have increases. The highest increase is 1.1%. The highest decrease in the system is 11.2%. Can you tell me where you got your figure of 12% more students being educated in Ontario? Because I think it's prevalent throughout the province that the enrolment is going down, not going up. So where did you get your 12%?

Mr Collins: The figures for the enrolment increase come from the Sudbury Board of Education annual report. The staff figures come from the Sudbury Board of Education annual report. The change in the budget comes from the Sudbury Board of Education annual report. That is based on our Sudbury Board of Education. As I said, I was speaking locally. I think I might have said "provincial," and I didn't mean that. I meant our budget.

Mr Beaubien: You said the cost of education in Ontario.

Mr Bartolucci: Thanks, Ken, for another excellent presentation. I have a quote here from the Ontario Public School Boards' Association that I'd like clarification on. In an earlier presentation, one of the presenters said it was the opposition that were preaching an assault on democracy. This is a quote from the Ontario Public School Boards' Association and I ask if you concur with it: "Our primary concern with Bill 104 lies with its assault on democracy. In

essence, it is the province's first step towards eliminating local education governments and their local taxing authority and seizing total control of education in Ontario." Do you agree with that?

Mr Collins: From all indications, that's what it seems to be. It seems to be an attempt to reduce any community involvement. If I'm not mistaken, Egerton Ryerson 150 years ago set it up so it would be a locally based, community-run, community-involved institution, and it sure is about to change a whole lot from that.

Mr Bartolucci: You certainly agree with the Ontario Public School Boards' Association.

Ms Martel: Thank you, Ken, for your presentation today. You say in your final paragraph, "Bill 104 gives us no indication to believe that these changes are for the betterment of education." When you read through Bill 104, is there anything that you can see in there which would lead you, as a teacher and as a parent who has four kids in the system, to believe that the quality of their education is going to be improved?

Mr Collins: Not presently, no.

Ms Martel: Can you say why you are worried about the government's track record, so that in looking at that, you are concerned that the situation is actually going to continue?

Mr Collins: In a nutshell, we were promised that the classroom would not be touched. I have four children in the system right now — superb teachers doing a wonderful job in a great board of education. However, the special ed services aren't there, some of the classes are starting to become bigger. It's a situation which is not improving right now.

The Chair: President Collins, thanks very much for being here and for presenting the views of your organization. We appreciate it.

Mr Collins: Thank you very much for giving me the time to present.

FIRST NATION COMMUNITIES

The Chair: First Nation Communities, Doris Boissoneau. Welcome to the committee. I would ask you, as you are seated, to introduce yourselves.

Mrs Doris Boissoneau: Meegwetch. I just want to introduce the two people with me: Elaine McDonagh from the Batchewana First Nation and Vaughan Johnston from the North Shore Tribal Council, who is the education director. My name is Doris Boissoneau. Before I start, I would like to introduce myself in my language.

Remarks in Ojibway.

I know nobody understood what I said.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I'm sure it wasn't good for the government.

Mrs Boissoneau: No.

Mr Beaubien: I thought it was quite flowery.

Mrs Boissoneau: My name is Doris Boissoneau and I am a member of the Garden River First Nation. I'm presently serving my second term as a native representative for my community in the Sault Ste Marie separate school board. I work at Sault College as a native language professor, and I'm committed to the preservation of the native language and culture of our people.

Since the introduction of Bill 104 in January of this year, many aboriginal leaders, educators, administrators and parents have met to discuss the implications of this bill. Member nations of the Union of Ontario Indians met in Garden River on February 12 and 13, and on February 14 member nations of the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians met in London, Ontario. Today, this education issue will be discussed at the all-chiefs meeting taking place in Toronto today. Further meetings are planned with all native trustees at the end of this month.

I am pleased to be able to address your committee today and bring to your attention some areas of concern and recommendations from the first nation communities.

The government of Canada recognizes the inherent right of self-government as an existing aboriginal right under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. We also recognize that education within the act is a provincial responsibility.

The right of self-government is a right which must always be interpreted in a manner that respects aboriginal and treaty rights — section 25 of the Constitution Act, 1982. It is a federally recognized inherent right that must be responsive to Ontario's educational circumstances of the first nation people, our right to be a distinct people with governments, and in terms of distinctiveness of diversity of cultures both within and across aboriginal peoples of Ontario.

The guiding principles: The first nations, previously made reference to, utilize the following guiding principles and envision the changes in the education system under the Ministry of Education would reflect that aboriginal people are a distinct people; aboriginal people are a self-determining people; aboriginal people must be dealt with on a government-to-government basis; aboriginal control of aboriginal education must reflect the need to have direct involvement in the impacts of Bill 104.

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Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act and amendments to the provincial Education Act: The province of Ontario is changing the way it deals with elementary and secondary education. First nations in general can appreciate and support change in the system as it presently exists.

It is with progressive change that we may collectively better the system that serves our children. To ensure positive and progressive growth, the first nations are recommending that education legislation at the provincial level actively address the issues of education for first nations.

Throughout several discussions with the aforementioned first nations many concerns were raised, with recommendations attached. It is only with first nations involved that the issues raised can be met, with long-term gains for the first nations and the people of Ontario.

Highlights: First nations are desirous of a relationship with the province of Ontario where our guiding principles are recognized and included in meaningful discussions that pertain to improving the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system. The changes in the education system in Ontario raise several issues reflecting first nations and first nation direction. First nations identify with change but emphatically state that the first nation involvement is essential in the development and implementation of the new initiatives.

First nation issues raised, but not limited to, include the following: With regard to fewer school boards, first nations are concerned with native representation on the amalgamated school boards. First nations anticipate their involvement on the district school boards and are desirous of establishing the process of inclusion of aboriginal representation and the agreed-upon process identified in the Education Act.

First nations spend more than \$60 million annually for 8,344 first nation students in tuition payments to the provincial school boards in Ontario. This is provided by INAC. First nations collectively rebuke any reference to a master tuition agreement between the province and the federal government.

First nations want assurance that tuition agreements will be negotiated with first nations and that the process will be determined in consultation with first nations. It is equally important that the agreed-upon process be identified in the Education Act.

Previous capital investments made on behalf of the first nations by INAC represent large capital infusions to respective boards of education. It is recommended that capital investments be revisited with consultation with the first nations.

The Education Improvement Commission represents a body that will be instrumental in effecting change and growth in the provincial school systems. It is essential that a first nation representative be included in the makeup of the commission, their committees and their subcommittees. First nations expect to be part of the solution. Here are some of our recommendations.

On fewer school boards:

Aboriginal representation: that first nation representation be included in the district school boards and that first nation consultation occur to determine process.

Tuition agreements: strongly disagree with a master tuition agreement between the province and the federal government. Tuition agreements must be negotiated with first nations and the process be determined with first nation consultation, the agreed-upon process to be identified in the Education Act.

Native advisory committees: that native advisory committees be included as essential on the district school boards and that native consultation regarding representation and process on such committees occur.

School councils: that school councils include native representation and that the process include native consultation.

Special education advisory committee: that SEACs include aboriginal representation and that the proper process leading to this be done through native consultation.

Capital investments: that capital investments by INAC on behalf of first nations be revisited with first nation consultation.

On the Education Improvement Commission:

Representation on the EIC: that first nation representation be included on the EIC and that first nation consultation occur with the Chiefs of Ontario.

The EIC committees, Bill 104, section 338: first nations conclude representation on committees is essential and that representation on such be determined by a first-nation-driven process.

The EIC subcommittees, Bill 104, section 339: first nations conclude representation on committees and subcommittees is essential and that representation on such be determined by a first nation-driven process.

Curriculum development: that curriculum be developed in consultation with first nation people to ensure native inclusiveness.

Native as a second language and native studies — which is what I am involved in — that curriculum be developed and delivered by native people themselves.

First nation people are a distinct people, a self-determining people, a self-governing people; aboriginal control of aboriginal education: that these social factors be recognized by inclusion in the Education Act and that they be used as fundamental principles in guiding educational reforms.

Mr Michael Brown: Meegwetich. You've made some significant points, one of which I think is being overlooked by the government: The large amount of first nation dollars that are spent on our educational system.

This morning we had the Manitoulin Board of Education here, which has a large proportion of first nation students within its board. They tell me, at least in the secondary panel, a third of their revenue is derived from the first nations. If the first nations choose to educate their own students, perhaps at the secondary level, the impact on the Manitoulin Board of Education would be to have the number of their high school students cut to about 400 or 450 and therefore not only the resources financially reduced but also the number of courses they could offer to students in general because of the smaller school.

I think you're making some excellent points, and you have some excellent allies among the present boards of education, which are saying virtually identical things to what you're saying. The government needs to take heed of what you're saying to us today. Meegwetich. Thank you for coming.

Mr Wildman: Thank you for your presentation. I again reiterate the comments of my friend from Algoma-Manitoulin about the contributions of INAC and the first nations to education, particularly in northern Ontario, but in many boards in southern Ontario too, for instance, in areas around Brantford and so on.

I guess the main point you're making is that you should be dealt with on a government-to-government basis and that the first nations must be consulted and must have representation on the Education Improvement Commission, on the committees. There must be native representation on the new boards, and how that is determined must be determined through consultation and negotiation with first nations.

What approaches has the government made to the Chiefs of Ontario and/or the treaty organizations with regard to beginning those consultations and negotiations?

Mrs Boissoneau: I can also say that there actually never has been any consultation with regard to the education needs of the students with our first nation leaders. It has always been handed down: "This is the way it is. This is the way it's going to be presented."

Mr Skarica: I was impressed by the \$60-million figure, over \$7,200 per student. We heard from a first nation representative yesterday, and he gave what I thought was

a very impassioned speech indicating that there are still high unemployment rates among first nations, that the education system — my impression of what he was telling us — is not serving the first nation people all that well and there needs to be a lot of improvement.

It doesn't seem to be money, because that's a staggering amount of money. What's wrong and what do we need to address? How can we improve that situation?

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Mr Wildman: That's a good question, but we could use a week on it.

Mrs Boissoneau: What is the problem?

Mr Skarica: I know you can't adequately answer it in a minute.

Mrs Boissoneau: The problem is that there's no direct involvement by the aboriginal communities for our input in the education of our students.

The Chair: Thank you very much, all of you, for coming. It's really been very enlightening to have you here to present your views. I know you drove all the way from Sault Ste Marie as well. We truly appreciate that.

Mrs Boissoneau: Meegwetich.

The Chair: And meegwetich. Absolutely.

ASSOCIATION FRANCO-ONTARIENNE DES CONSEILS D'ÉCOLES CATHOLIQUES

The Chair: I call the Association franco-ontarienne des conseils d'écoles catholiques. André Berthelot. Ms McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you Madam Chair. As you'll know, I had indicated yesterday that I had, after the ministry briefing, given an indication of what questions remained outstanding that required written responses in order to lessen the workload for the ministry in providing written responses to all of them. I've tabled that list of outstanding questions with the research officer and I believe he will circulate that to members of the committee. I want to point out that that is exclusive of any questions that have been raised yesterday or today.

The Chair: Thank you for that. Bienvenue. C'est un plaisir de vous voir ici.

M. André Berthelot : Je suis président de l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils d'écoles catholiques, et à côté de moi, le directeur général de l'AFOCEC, M. Armand Malette. Je vous remercie de nous accueillir et de nous permettre la chance de faire quelques interventions au sujet du projet de loi 104.

Notre association regroupe environ 23 000 élèves. Les conseils s'étendent de Thunder Bay à l'ouest, Timmins au nord, Simcoe-Essex dans le sud et le conseil de Sudbury est un de nos conseils membres. Nous avons quelque 90 conseillers scolaires qui oeuvrent à l'intérieur de l'AFOCEC.

Les caractéristiques d'un conseil catholique français ont beaucoup à voir avec les recommandations que nous allons vous faire concernant le projet de loi 104. Nous tentons de prévoir un lieu d'apprentissage et de développement dans notre système d'éducation, une communauté de foi. Nous agissons à notre avis comme les garants et les promoteurs de la culture et de la langue françaises, et nous tentons toujours une ouverture sur la communauté environnante.

Je dois dire de prime abord que l'AFOCEC appuie le projet de loi 104, et pourquoi ? C'est parce que nous avons attendu depuis très longtemps la gestion par et pour les francophones à travers la province. Ce projet de loi nous donne cette occasion, et malgré les réserves que nous pouvons avoir, il reste encore que nous devons féliciter le gouvernement pour avoir mis en branle ces démarches, même si on n'est pas aussi simples pour croire que c'est la raison d'être de cette législation.

Les concerne que nous avons, concernant le projet de loi, ont plutôt à faire avec le financement. Cela a toujours été le cas. Nous sommes rassurés quand même par notre participation et par l'ouverture du gouvernement aux démarches que nous avons prises pour développer un modèle de recasion par étudiant à travers la province. Nous croyons que les obligations du gouvernement vont au-delà de cette formule que nous attendons incessamment et impatiemment. À notre avis, le gouvernement doit aussi pouvoir une éducation qui est équivalente. Les tribunaux ont statué que dans certaines circonstances, les montants d'argent alloués par élève devraient dépasser les montants alloués aux élèves anglophones afin de permettre le rattrapage et le démarrage.

C'est pour dire qu'il y a eu pendant les courants des années, par la négligence certainement des recettes fiscales de l'assimilation, il y a eu des pertes d'accusées, et il nous semble qu'il est temps de remédier à ces torts et c'est avec des subventions de démarrage et de rattrapage que cela peut être fait. À notre avis, l'article 335(3)(e) où la commission doit examiner des questions touchant à la répartition de l'actif et passif des conseils existants, doit être amendé afin de refléter ces principes et de reconnaître les besoins légitimes du système catholique français des argent de rattrapage et de démarrage. Ce modèle de financement, à notre avis, doit contenir aussi une certaine flexibilité concernant les dépenses discrétionnaires afin de maintenir et de favoriser l'éducation catholique.

Selon ce ressort du mandat unique que nous avons de promouvoir la foi catholique, l'établissement du curriculum catholique est une responsabilité primaire de nos conseils scolaires, et c'est une responsabilité que jusqu'à présent, le gouvernement de l'Ontario n'a pas voulu soulever.

Nous voudrions aussi faire quelques suggestions en rapport avec la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, c'est-à-dire sa structure-même. Attendu qu'au-delà de 83 % des étudiants sont catholiques français dans le système français, il nous semble impératif que la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation soit constituée d'au moins deux francophones, dont l'un serait catholique. Je crois que vous n'avez qu'à examiner l'étendue de l'effet sur ce projet de loi en rapport avec les conseils de langue française pour vous rendre compte de l'importance de ce genre de représentativité au sein de la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation. Il y aura peut-être une autre mesure de rechange qui serait acceptable — et je crois qu'ayant parlé à M. Cooke et à M^{me} Vanstone, c'est une chose sur laquelle je crois qu'ils se penchent, et cela serait la création d'une équipe francophone à l'intérieur qui serait en mesure de traiter, de transiger avec les intervenants francophones dans la province.

En ce qui a trait à l'article 335(c), on remet à la commission la responsabilité de cerner les questions touchant à la

création des conseils de district de langue française. À notre avis, ce mandat est un peu imprécis et incomplet. Il y a certainement des différences très importantes entre le système catholique français et les autres systèmes d'éducation. C'est sur ces items-là que nous croyons que c'est important d'avoir d'autres études : par exemple, les besoins de curriculum catholique et de préparation pour des programmes pour contrer l'assimilation de permettre le rattrapage.

Ce sont toutes des questions, à notre avis, qui devraient être confiées à un comité local d'amélioration, et pour une étude approfondie par ceux qui sont principalement intéressés. Alors, c'est une proposition que nous vous faisons pour l'amendement de 335(c).

En ce qui a trait à 335(f), ce qui traite de l'approvisionnement à l'extérieur des services non liés à l'éducation, nous avons déjà tenté de vous éclaircir dans la mesure de notre possible de l'importance que nous tenons de pourvoir à la communauté francophone un lieu où ils peuvent travailler en français. Pour cette raison-là, nous croyons que n'importe quelle structure qui est approuvée éventuellement pour prendre la relève des services non liés à l'enseignement doivent tenir compte des droits des francophones de transiger dans leur langue. Que ce soit par le truchement d'assujettir ces organismes à la Loi des services en français ou d'autres façons, l'important c'est que nous soyons certains que, dans la mesure du possible, l'enfant aux soins de nos conseils de 8 h 30 jusqu'à l'heure où il est remis à ses parents soit capable de jouir de l'influence de sa culture française.

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En ce qui a trait à l'article 344, les décisions définitives de la commission : Selon cette disposition ou cet article de la loi, il n'y aurait pas de recours aux tribunaux. À notre avis, si ce genre d'article a l'intention de diminuer les droits des francophones et des catholiques de s'appuyer sur le droit constitutionnel, il est non recevable. Je ne crois pas que ce soit l'intention du projet de loi en effet, mais quand même je doit souligner qu'en ce qui a trait à la confessionnalité, en ce qui a trait aux droits linguistiques, nous nous attendons à ce que, si nous avons un accord de quelque sorte avec la commission, cette question ne sera pas réglée par la commission mais, je crois bien, par les tribunaux de l'Ontario.

Je passe maintenant à une préoccupation centrale à plusieurs de nos conseils membres, soit la création des conseils de district et leurs membres. Je crois que certains principes de base devront être pris en considération dans la restructuration des conseils de district.

Une de ces affaires-là, c'est que le nombre d'étudiants ne devrait pas être le seul critère. C'est un non-sens de penser qu'en jugeant simplement par le nombre d'étudiants, la représentativité effective, démocratique puisse se faire. On doit prendre en considération les affinités existantes des communautés. On doit prendre en considération les distances géographiques. Nous avons plusieurs inquiétudes en ce a trait à la redevabilité envers nos parents.

Demandez-vous et posez-vous la question : Comment est-ce qu'un conseiller scolaire muni ou nanti des mesures qu'on lui donne peut représenter effectivement des gens qui s'étendent sur 450 milles ? C'est une question qui doit être abordée. Il y a plusieurs façons de pallier ce problème. Ce

ne sont pas des problèmes sans méthode de résolution. Évidemment, on doit se pencher sur la technologie, et pour ce faire, le gouvernement, je crois, est ouvert et doit encourager des argentiers pour augmenter le niveau de technologie disponible. Mais ce n'est pas suffisant. On doit avoir la capacité de se rencontrer face à face, non seulement au table du conseil mais aussi d'avoir l'occasion de le faire avec les électeurs.

Nous proposons à cet égard, et surtout au niveau du nombre de conseillers scolaires, parce qu'ils sont peu nombreux maintenant pour faire le travail qui leur était assigné et on peut se douter qu'avec les nombres arbitraires qui sont imposés, leur tâche sera facilitée, que le règlement à cet égard prévu à l'article 327(3)(d) soit assoupli afin de permettre que la décision sur le nombre ultime d'un conseil, des membres d'un conseil, soit l'objet d'une recommandation à la commission par un comité local. Alors, vous avez à l'intérieur de la loi la possibilité de créer des comités locaux qui pourraient travailler ou faire des recommandations à la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation qui sont pertinentes dans la région. Je vous encourage, messieurs et mesdames, de ne pas juger qu'une seule solution soit admissible pour tous les conseils, français, anglais, catholiques et publics.

Il y a peut-être de différents modèles de représentativité qui doivent être considérés pour mieux assurer la représentativité. En tant que membres élus, je suis certain que vous reconnaissez l'importance de la démocratie et l'importance de la redevabilité. C'est pour améliorer ce genre de représentation que nous vous demandons de bien vouloir vous pencher sur les comités locaux qui auront, eux, une très bonne idée de ce qui est nécessaire concernant le nombre de conseillers scolaires qui doivent siéger à ces conseils scolaires.

La Présidente : Merci bien. Vous avez employé tous le temps à votre disposition. Je m'excuse, je regrette que nous n'ayons pas plus de temps, mais merci de votre présence, de votre participation.

CONFEDERATION SECONDARY SCHOOL PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Chair: Confederation Secondary School council, Doug Anderson. Welcome, Chair Anderson. We're pleased to have you here.

Mr Doug Anderson: Thank you very much. My copresenter is our student rep on the council, Erin Marjerrison. Erin is going to present a little bit and I'm going to present a little bit, but before we start, I'd like to present our regrets to this council, this hearing, that our twin school couldn't be here with us. They wanted to be with us but I'm afraid Capreol high has been closed, so they could not come and present with us.

Mr Wildman: Don't raise that. I got in trouble for raising that.

Mr Anderson: I'm sorry, but that's our twin school. They couldn't be here.

You're a pretty intimidating group, so it took up until last night to convince Erin to come with me here today to talk to you people.

The Chair: I can assure you they're not an intimidating group at all. Go right ahead.

Ms Erin Marjerrison: My name is Erin Marjerrison and I sit on the parent advisory council as a student representative for Confederation Secondary School in the valley.

As a student during this time of educational reform I find myself at a loss. Any changes that come about to the educational system will directly or indirectly affect me as a student. Sadly, I must say that I have limited information about what is really taking place.

Everything moves so quickly, and only filtered information is received by me as a student. Often what I hear are opinions of people with a vested interest. It is disheartening for me, knowing that the people these changes will affect the most, the students, are not informed of what is happening. Consequently they are not able to form their own opinions and are not given a chance to express their views on some of these issues that will in turn affect them.

Most of what I have heard in response to the changes being discussed here today has been only from a negative standpoint. From what I know of Bill 104, I have formed some of my own opinions.

The amalgamation of school boards may be good for down south, but it is my understanding that for us northerners this may not be such a good idea. With regions spread over a great distance, I'm not sure if the needs of each individual board will be reached. I don't want the students to suffer, so this is a very great concern of mine.

With the enlarging of the region boards comes a need for fewer trustees. I personally see no problem with this. I feel that a good move was introducing the clause that inhibits spouses of teachers to become trustees. These people would have a vested interest, so therefore I believe this is a step in the right direction.

I hope that communication between the students increases so that they have a chance to state their views and give input on what is directly going to affect them.

I have to apologize. I feel really badly that I wasn't able to present a strong, in-depth, detailed presentation for you, but I don't blame myself; I blame the people who don't feel that students should have a chance to get this information and be able to speak about it.

Thank you for your time.

Mr Anderson: With all the major changes that have been happening in the education system in Ontario, and being new to a parent advisory council and what a parent advisory council is, it has been a challenge to keep up to and understand what is happening to the education system we have.

Change is something we have to accept in today's society, but the changes that are being made today are only a small part. It seems to us that we're being fed only a little bit of information at a time and we do not get the whole picture all at once. We question the rationale and ulterior motives behind the government's thinking on education reform in Ontario. What we are saying is that as parents we don't understand what you are doing, and why so fast. We are the ones who are paying for this. Slow down. Let us all work together on this.

1350

You as a government are telling us that we need fewer school boards and that they will be able to cover a larger area, with better results and put more money in the classroom and improve the quality of education. How? You haven't told us or shown us.

With the consolidation of the school boards, trustees will have a much greater area to cover. This means that there will be greater transportation and associated costs with the holding of meetings for the boards. Are we now going to have to look at teleconferencing, e-mail etc, and just what is the cost to implement these items?

You say that we will not have to tax locally as you are going to do this for us from the provincial level. How? Any time that you have taxed us in the past and stated that the money would go back into the system has not worked out. Take our hunting and fishing licences. The money that was generated from these is not being fully put back into the sport so why would you do it for education.

In northern Ontario we have special needs, and as a parent and parent advisory council rep I would like to know if you are going to set money aside for our needs. Snow removal: With the winter we've just had, the cost of removing snow so students and staff could get to schools is of prime concern in any budget. Also heating: You have to have a warm and comfortable environment conducive to learning. In northern Ontario it takes up a major portion of any school budget, but at the same time it is also necessary. We would like to know if any money is going to be put aside for northern Ontario concerns.

Bill 104 is establishing a five- to seven-member commission to oversee the transition to a new system. As a parent and parent advisory council rep, I strongly suggest that you repeal section 344 of this bill, as no one governing body should be given total dictatorial powers over education with no recourse on any party's part. Can you tell me when in Ontario we formed a dictatorship? Because that is what you are creating. You are elected by the people, for the people, and you have to be answerable to the people for the wellbeing of the students.

You are creating implementation committees, but who is going to make up these committees? Will parents, teachers, principals and trustees as well as students be represented? I hear that you have already created some of these committees. When will we as the parents know about this? After it is all over and done with?

One of the greatest difficulties we have discovered — and I see nothing reflecting this in Bill 104 — is the parent advisory council's lack of being able to access information. Everything is given to us at the last minute and we have to dig for information. Is this on purpose or has this government another motive for our council that it is not telling us about? There is no provision in this legislation to provide for and protect parents' legal liability. Why? You put in protection for everyone else but not the parent advisory councils?

I don't see any mention in this legislation that when schools are about to be closed — and I hope the government will realize it is important to practice what it preaches — to form partnerships in education, parents, students, teachers, principals and board trustees all have to be included in the whole process and not be brought in at the end when there is no other choice but to follow through with the closing.

We hear of lots of cuts and changes to schools, principals, staffing etc, but I don't see very many solutions to the problems being presented. We are not here as a parent advisory council to be a new and free workforce for this

government, and we will not sit by and let this or any other government destroy our education system. We are accepting the challenge to try to comprehend and understand what has been taking place, but you better not forget the most important thing — the students. They seem to be left out of this equation. Those students are our children and we as parents will not let you or anybody else tamper or harm our kids. What we are saying is, don't throw education reform at us a little bit at a time and expect us to buy it. We as parents won't buy in unless we are included as part of the whole process and not just little pieces here and there.

Ms Martel: Thank you very much, both Doug and Erin, for coming today. We appreciate that you've taken the time to do so.

Doug, you said in your comments, "We are not here as a parent advisory council to be a new and free workforce for this government." Through your remarks you certainly talked about your concerns already about your inability to get information, have some sense of what your role and your responsibilities are. Are you concerned that with Bill 104 going into effect, your roles and your responsibilities are going to increase but you will be in the same position as you are now, not having any idea of what you're supposed to, how to do it and how it's going to make the system better?

Mr Anderson: Totally. Just to present on this, I found out five hours after the hearing closed, the deadline to be able to present here, that this was taking place. I would like to thank Lyn McLeod and Shelley very much for answering my concerns on being able to present to you. We can't seem to get information.

You've set up parent advisory councils in Ontario. You as a government have access to all our names and information. We can't get information. You should have access; you're the ones who set us up. You shake your head, but our boards all have our names, so the information has to come for us in that we've got to know what's going on.

I had to go through Shelley, through your office, to get a copy of Bill 104, to be able to read up on it. The lack of being able to get information is phenomenal, and it's hard. Then how can we come and make an informed presentation to you? I have three kids in high school, and I'll tell you, it's very concerning to me as a parent.

Mr Arnott: I want to thank you very much for your presentation. Just why I was shaking my head: You indicated that as parent councils we know exactly who you are. I just want you to know that I tried to get a list of the chairs of the school councils in Wellington county, which is the area I represent, from our school board, and I had great difficulty in getting it. In fact, initially I was denied that information because of privacy legislation. I eventually did get the information because I persisted, quite frankly.

Mr Anderson: I'll give you a copy of our region here.

Mr Arnott: I'll look forward to getting that. Thank you.

Mr Anderson: I brought one with me, so if you've got a photocopier machine.

Mrs McLeod: I'm pleased that neither of you felt that you should apologize for not having the full picture, because none of us has the full picture. That's been a constant frustration of people who have presented. As you've said, what we have here in front of us is one small piece of a puzzle and we'd all like to know what the rest of the puzzle is going to look like.

Somebody was just saying to me out in the hallway that they were able to get a copy of the bill but they didn't get the maps. How can you deal with what school board amalgamation means in northern Ontario if you haven't even had a chance to look at the maps? You haven't seen the maps, either.

Mr Anderson: I didn't even know there were maps, until now.

Mrs McLeod: The maps that show what boards are going to be amalgamated and what the jurisdictions will be like, so it is very frustrating.

In spite of all of that, in my view, the reason I'm so concerned is that this is one step towards the eventual loss of school boards because I think the school boards are going to become totally ineffective. That leaves only parent councils. Somebody yesterday said we're going to end up with 5,000 mini-school boards, every school council. How optimistic would you be of being able to effectively lobby Queen's Park on behalf of the students in your school if that's where you had to go?

Mr Anderson: If that's where I have to go, I will go. I have no qualms on that because I am very adamant. We are very fortunate that we have students and parents in our school who will stand up and be counted in our region. I would have liked the other half of our school to be here with us.

1400

Interjection.

Mr Anderson: Yes, that's right. That's why we have empty chairs here. They don't exist any more and that's the problem.

Mrs McLeod: You're going to make sure they hear you.

Mr Anderson: Yes. We would be willing to go.

The Chair: Erin, I want to thank you for coming forward. It can't be easy, but you did it with tremendous grace and eloquence and we thank you. Chair Anderson, thank you as well. I'd like to give you my personal copies of the map to take with you so that maybe the bill will make a little more sense.

COALITION POUR L'ÉDUCATION, DISTRICT DE COCHRANE

The Chair: I call upon la Coalition pour l'éducation du district de Cochrane, Marie Jeanne Lacroix.

M. Bisson: Pour ceux qui ne me connaissent pas, je suis Gilles Bisson, député local de Cochrane-Sud. Marie Jeanne Lacroix, de la Coalition de l'éducation du district de Cochrane, est une autre présentatrice, et M. Smith est étudiant. Je veux seulement donner le contexte de la présentation, et M^{me} Lacroix va faire la présentation détaillée.

Tout comme on a dit jusqu'à date, le gros problème avec le projet de loi 104 et avec beaucoup d'initiatives du gouvernement de l'Ontario, c'est que les commissions scolaires, les éducateurs, les parents et les étudiants n'ont pas l'information pour être capables de décerner exactement ce que le gouvernement veut faire et de quelle manière s'y prendre.

Quand le projet de loi a été soumis à la Législature en automne, le débat qu'il a eu en janvier, les conseils scolaires de la région de Cochrane, des parents et des

étudiants, des syndicats et autres m'ont contacté en tant que député. Ils ont dit : «Écoutez, Gilles, on veut savoir ce qui se passe. Peux-tu nous donner de l'information ?» À ce point-là on a formé une coalition faite des conseillers scolaires, des éducateurs, des élèves, de tous ceux dans la communauté de Cochrane-Sud qui sont représentés sur ce comité pour se pencher sur la question d'où va le gouvernement avec le projet de loi 104, et comment pouvons nous, comme communauté, agir ?

Le comité a organisé des séances publiques à Iroquois Falls et à Timmins et il y a eu des audiences publiques d'une journée chacune. Au-dessus de 350 personnes entre Iroquois Falls et Timmins sont venus pour écouter, d'autres pour présenter, d'autres pour s'informer, et la présentation que vous allez entendre est la coalition de tout cet ouvrage qui a été fait avec les présentations.

M^{me} Jeanne Lacroix : Notre présentation est faite en points. Premièrement, la taille des conseils scolaires. Plusieurs présentations traitaient de la grandeur des conseils scolaires dans notre région. En général, les gens trouvaient que la région représentée par le conseil était trop vaste.

Les gens étaient choqués du fait que sept conseils scolaires avaient été fusionnés pour créer un mégaconseil, qui serait difficile à bien desservir.

Un conseiller scolaire a fait remarquer qu'il faudrait huit heures de voyage en voiture pour se rendre d'un bout à l'autre de la région. Ce conseiller craignait que la dimension humaine soit perdue avec la gestion d'un conseil si vaste, et qu'il est essentiel de préserver l'aspect humain dans la gestion scolaire.

D'autres participants ont souligné que ces mégaconseils comme le nôtre, à titre d'exemple, couvriraient 22 communautés, et qu'il n'y aurait pas de représentation équitable puisque le nombre de conseillers est limité à seulement 12.

Un enseignant a fait remarquer qu'avec un tel mégaconseil, les parents n'obtiendraient pas la représentation nécessaire au sein de leur communauté. Cet enseignant craignait que l'éducation allait souffrir en l'absence de représentation vraiment communautaire de la part des parents et des conseillers.

D'autres préoccupations soulevées traitaient du fait que ces nouveaux conseils scolaires de mégaconseils n'auraient aucun pouvoir décisionnel, étant donné que le gouvernement prendrait toutes les décisions quant à la gestion et au financement des écoles.

Un participant était préoccupé du fait que les entreprises locales ne pourraient pas travailler avec le nouveau conseil, puisque l'achat de biens et services serait centralisé, sans l'implication de conseils locaux. La préoccupation était essentiellement que les gens d'affaires locaux ne pourraient pas faire concurrence contre les mégavendeurs et fournisseurs faisant affaire avec un pouvoir d'achat centralisé au mégaconseil.

(2) Les conseillers sans pouvoir : Certaines personnes étaient préoccupées du fait que le projet de loi 104 entraînerait l'élection de conseillers qui n'agiraient essentiellement qu'en tant qu'agents du gouvernement. La préoccupation était que cette situation n'était pas démocratique, puisque les gens croient que leurs représentants élus peuvent les représenter de façon réelle.

Il a été commenté qu'en l'absence de conseillers qui peuvent vraiment prendre des décisions, les services locaux et communautaires impliqués dans le secteur de l'éducation seraient perdus, puisque le pouvoir décisionnel serait centralisé à Queen's Park.

(3) Manque de responsabilité juridique de la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation. Les gens ont exprimé leurs craintes que la CAE serait trop puissante et, effectivement, non démocratique puisque ses décisions seront finales, sans pouvoir faire l'objet d'une révision du tribunal.

Certains ont commenté le fait que ce petit groupe de personnes nommées à la CAE aurait trop de pouvoir et qu'il ne serait pas tenu responsable de ses actions ou des décisions qu'il prendrait concernant le système d'éducation publique.

Il fut également noté que le gouvernement ne veut pas transférer le contrôle de l'éducation, par le biais de la loi 104, à des conseillers et des conseillères élus. Les conseillers seront obligés de mettre en oeuvre les décisions de la CAE, et ne contrôleront pas les finances de façon importante, donc, indirectement ils ne géreront pas leurs propres conseils scolaires.

Les gens ont fait connaître leurs préoccupations du fait que la CAE prendrait des décisions importantes au sujet du système d'éducation publique sans consulter la population de façon convenable, et plus particulièrement, les personnes travaillant dans le secteur de l'éducation.

(4) La gestion scolaire et les décisions financières de Queen's Park. Les représentants de l'AÉFO secondaire de Timmins ont rappelé que le groupe de travail du ministère de l'Éducation formé de divers intervenantes et intervenants du milieu de l'éducation a conclu que le financement de l'éducation devrait se diviser en trois catégories, à savoir : le programme de base en salle de classe ; le soutien à l'enseignement et à la salle de classe ; et l'administration centrale et la régie.

Le gouvernement actuel a promis de ne pas toucher à la salle de classe, mais il ne faut pas se leurrer. Les grandes compressions budgétaires qu'il doit effectuer ne pourront faire autrement qu'avoir des conséquences directes et indirectes sur celle-ci. Dans son estimation, le gouvernement a déterminé que 80 % des coûts de l'éducation ne sont pas reliés directement à la salle de classe et que conséquemment des coupures peuvent être faites dans les domaines suivants : temps de préparation et de correction ; orientation et services professionnels ; services de maintien ; administration des écoles ; postes administratifs du conseil.

On ajoute aussi à la liste les services essentiels, tels que le transport, le chauffage et l'éclairage ainsi que l'entretien de l'édifice. Comment le gouvernement peut-il croire que des coupures drastiques dans tous ces services n'auront pas de conséquences directes dans la salle de classe ?

De plus, dans les faits, les réductions d'impôts promises par M. Harris grâce supposément à ces compressions n'aboutiront à rien de concret, puisqu'au bout du compte les municipalités devront augmenter leurs impôts fonciers pour couvrir les responsabilités accrues qui leur incomberont, ce qui ferait bien sûr paraître les municipalités comme des «grosses méchantes» de tout cet exercice.

N'oublions pas les conséquences sociales néfastes de toutes ces coupures, à savoir la mise au chômage ou à des

conditions de travail beaucoup plus précaires et moins avantageuses de tous ces travailleurs qui ne sont pas en salle de classe et chez qui on va sabrer.

Cela causera aussi des problèmes aux écoles francophones. En raison du mandat culturel et linguistique confié à ces écoles, quelle garantie avons-nous que le financement des services soutenant cette mission ne sera pas touché ?

Selon une enseignante du niveau élémentaire, le gouvernement tente par tous les moyens de démontrer que le système actuel d'éducation va mal, tout cela afin de justifier les coupures. Selon elle, même les tests d'aptitudes provinciaux au niveau élémentaire peuvent être perçus ains.

Les difficultés ainsi que les incongruités des questions de ces tests prouvent bien la méconnaissance du ministère sur ses propres programmes.

Il est aussi souligné que les écoles catholiques qui ont comme tâche supplémentaire l'enseignement de la catéchèse ne peuvent toujours être rendus au même endroit dans le programme que le ministère le prévoit.

Avant de parler de coupures et d'autres réformes, le gouvernement devrait essayer de réparer les failles déjà existantes dans le système : mauvais timing, informations à la dernière minute, examens d'aptitudes standardisés pour toute la province, ne tenant pas compte de la vraie réalité du milieu scolaire.

1410

Tout cela démontre bien que le milieu scolaire n'est pas suffisamment consulté et que, quand on semble le faire, on ne tient pas compte de ses recommandations et des besoins qu'il exprime.

(5) Sous-traitance et privatisation de services : Les gens ont fait aussi remarquer qu'à long terme, il n'y aurait pas de véritable économie en accordant des contrats privés, puisque l'entreprise doit d'abord être payée, pour ensuite payer ses employés, tout en faisant un profit. De plus, les anciens employés se retrouvant au chômage ou sous toute autre forme d'assistance publique, cela finira quand même par coûter plus cher aux contribuables.

Un travailleur d'entretien a fait remarquer que le roulement du personnel avec des entrepreneurs privés serait un facteur plus important, affectant l'environnement scolaire et entraînant possiblement des situations non sécuritaires.

Un enseignant a soulevé la préoccupation que la sous-traitance de services autres que l'enseignement n'était qu'un début, et qu'elle entraînerait bientôt la sous-traitance de toutes sortes de services, y compris l'enseignement. Elle entraînerait également la privatisation de notre système d'éducation publique, nous rapprochant ainsi du système américain.

(6) Conventions collectives : De nombreux enseignants ont fait connaître leurs inquiétudes face au manque de provisions dans le projet de loi 104 en ce qui a trait aux conventions collectives conclues avant janvier 1998. La crainte est que le gouvernement veut changer la façon dont elle compose avec les conventions collectives qui sont en place actuellement.

Il était également noté que le gouvernement pourrait peut-être tenter de fusionner tous les différents syndicats en une négociation centralisée, selon un format restreint, pour ne pas avoir à composer avec des syndicats particuliers.

Cela représenterait une confrontation importante impliquant les syndicats d'enseignants et enseignants qui ont été développés au cours des dernières décennies.

Il est également à craindre que le gouvernement tenterait de désigner le rôle d'enseignant et d'enseignante comme service essentiel, éliminant ainsi le droit de grève dans ce secteur, s'il le voulait.

Les gens craignent que le gouvernement, dans sa détermination de maintenir sa promesse d'une réduction d'impôt aux gens de l'Ontario, au profit des riches surtout, pourrait tenter de faire payer ses réductions d'impôt sur les dos des enseignants et des enseignantes.

Nous avons sept conseils d'éducation qui seraient ensemble. Ça veut dire qu'ils y aurait sept contrats pour les secrétaires, sept pour les concierges, sans compter les maîtres. La question était comment le gouvernement pensait les mettre tous ensemble sans coûter encore bien plus cher.

La Présidente : Excusez-moi. Il vous reste une minute.

M^{me} Lacroix : (7) La création de nouveaux conseils scolaires francophones : Le seul point positif du projet de loi consiste dans le fait que les francophones auront la gestion de leurs écoles, officiellement après 125 ans de lutte. Mais dans les faits, c'est loin d'être la même chose. Comment ces écoles seront-elles gérées, avec quels moyens et quelle véritable pouvoir et autorité ?

Comme dans le cas des écoles anglophones, que signifie vraiment avoir la gestion de nos écoles sans pour autant avoir les outils pour vraiment pouvoir les gérer efficacement ?

Si les conseillers scolaires n'ont pas la possibilité de prendre les décisions financières, ils n'auront véritablement aucun vrai pouvoir, et cela même s'ils sont élus par la population. Ce n'est pas un véritable pouvoir de gestion. Ils ne feront alors que gérer les politiques gouvernementales. Où est la vraie démocratie là-dedans ?

La Présidente : Merci bien. On apprécie que vous nous ayez donné la perspective de votre coalition. Je regrette qu'il n'y a jamais beaucoup de temps.

Marketing Support Services; is Peter Mandl here? No. For the first time in about six days we have a lunch break. Ladies and gentlemen, with that we will be recessed until 3 o'clock.

The committee recessed from 1415 to 1501.

SUDBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION CONSEIL DE L'ÉDUCATION DE SUDBURY

The Chair: May I have the Sudbury Board of Education, French-language section, Jean-Marc Aubin. Monsieur Aubin, les autres ne sont pas venus, mais nous allons commencer.

M. Jean-Marc Aubin : Merci bien de nous accorder cette période de temps où je pourrai partager avec vous mes réactions au projet de loi 104.

I will be alternating in French and English throughout my time allotment. Thank you for granting me space so that I can share with you my reactions to Bill 104.

My name is Jean-Marc Aubin. I'm chair of the French-language section of the Sudbury Board of Education. I've been involved in education since 1982, previously on a French-language advisory committee, and for the last six years as chair of the French-language section.

The French-language section of the Sudbury board of education comprises eight schools — four secondary and four elementary — with a total of about 2,000 students.

Nobody knows better than I do that the main requirements, if one wants to engage in educating children, are students, programs and teachers. The rest will be determined according to available resources. We experienced in this very region clear proof of this when parents and guardians registered children in schools made entirely of portables because of the choice of programs offered therein. I will come back to this towards the end of my remarks.

Bill 104 provides for the establishment of district school boards. The latest attempt at rationalizing a restructuring or realignment of school boards before this bill was the Sweeney commission. As in previous studies, it recommended fewer school boards. Bill 104 does this at last and in a clean-cut fashion. It dismantles and eliminates existing boards, which is logical before defining boundaries of new ones. Near-unanimous approval of this purpose of the bill is evident in Ontario. The French-language section of Sudbury Board of Education could not agree more.

We regard the district aspect as a natural evolution of our efforts. It happens that for over four years now we've experienced very positive results in areas that are known as exclusive jurisdiction in a partnership with our counterparts from various communities of the north-central region. This first purpose, of "establishing district school boards," is the best way to go as far as we're concerned, at least for this region of north-central Ontario.

Comme autant de Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, je me réjouis bien sûr d'enfin pouvoir toucher à une vraie et pleine gestion par et pour les francophones. Nous pourrions, semble-t-il, mieux respirer et partager notre vision plutôt que de s'inquiéter tellement de notre survie comme Ontariens et Ontariennes, croire davantage à l'atout précieux que nous sommes, de par notre imagination et l'enrichissement que nous apportons à notre société.

La section de langue française du Conseil de l'éducation de Sudbury, forte de ses efforts coopératifs et du partage de ses meilleurs atouts, met au service du gouvernement toutes ses ressources afin d'assurer la plus grande réussite possible de la mise en place des nouveaux conseils.

Bill 104 permits the transition to a new system as defined in section 327 of the Education Act. When major changes such as this bill initiates are thrust upon us, literally hundreds of questions invade our minds because we care, because we are uncertain of the future and mostly because change is difficult, especially this magnitude of change.

There are three major types of initial realignments of school boards, as we see it.

First there's the Metro Toronto board. It already knows its boundaries and the number of trustees it will be comprised of, which is 22. It's in a peculiarly favourable situation in that it has thrived on negative grant structures for years, and it's in a position of strength as far as negotiating or inputting to the province about funding of education.

The second type is amalgamated boards, such as the Sudbury board, which I'm a part of. The Sudbury board and Espanola and Manitoulin are existing boards and they

will, for practical purposes, be amalgamated. They will lose, at the same time, their French-language sections.

Then there's a third kind, the newly created boards, such as French public boards that will cover vast territories and be comprised of sections of boards that heretofore were not legal entities except for areas of exclusive jurisdiction. A lot has been made of the territory covered by this board that I will be part of. It's the biggest one in the province, I guess. There's a lot of press that comes with it and there are a lot of reactions from associations of school boards and of teachers and from whoever wants to speak about the subject. It's the example that's used the most to show that the project is not feasible.

The reality is that when you talk of French public education in that vast territory, there are sections in Sudbury, in Espanola, in North Shore, in Michipicoten and Chapleau. Those have been involved in a cooperative of educational services for over four years now. All these people are used to working together and are probably best situated to make this board really flourish and be a success in a very short period of time. It's not like it's portrayed in the press; it's not a vast territory that's unmanageable.

It is in fact a number of individuals who are used to working together. The only individuals who will be added to this group that's already existing and functioning very well are the group from Geraldton and the group from Manitouwadge. They're small sections. One is very small and one has a high school. We've already communicated with these people and initiated some partnerships. When people across this province start pointing to this school district that goes from Sudbury to the Manitoba border, the reality is what I've just spelled out to you.

An important question in my mind relates to one of the newly created boards, and it begs a commonsense answer: Why could newly created boards not come into existence the very day of the next elections? If they do not, then legislation will have created a period in limbo that can be avoided.

In our case, for instance, sections of public boards from Chapleau, North Shore, Michipicoten, Espanola, Geraldton, Manitouwadge and Sudbury, after electing trustees to a long-awaited board, will have to sit by until January to take office. In the meantime the boards from where they originate will be adapting to one or more types of amalgamations. My suggestion is that in the case of newly created boards, the election date or even September 1997 is the answer. An appointed group can assure the same transition, a logical one, but the logic is gone if you wait until January 1. It's not there. People are going to be in limbo in between and others are merely taking care of amalgamations. Those who have the most to do will be in limbo.

1510

My suggestion, therefore, is clearly to go on election day or before that with the newly created boards, not to have a limbo period. It's a question of destabilizing in the least possible way the expectations of parents, of children and of teachers. I come back to the point I made at the beginning: to educate, we need students, we need programs and teachers. The better we address this reality, the more success we will have. We have lived that here in a very real fashion, where we had portables for six and seven years

respectively, schools made entirely of them, and students left brick buildings to come to these schools because of the program. If anybody doubts that to educate you need students, programs and teachers, there's living proof here in this town, and not just a few examples.

Nos expériences coopératives des années récentes nous ont permis de réaliser comment importante est l'autonomie locale. Afin d'assurer le respect de cette autonomie, nous suggérons que les argents générés dans une communauté y demeurent.

Local autonomy, whether it be it through trustees or through school councils or whatever, is and will be very important, especially to small communities. We have not found provisions that would ensure that money generated in a community remain or return to that community. We recommend this type of protection in the amendments.

What I'm talking about here is that if the province comes out with a formula that gives a number of dollars per student and allocates a number of square feet per student at an elementary or secondary level, moneys that are generated in Chapleau or in Wawa stay in Chapleau and Wawa, whether they're part of a district board, so that when the crunch comes, somebody doesn't decide to close a program because there are only eight kids in it in Wawa and there are 11 in Sudbury. The moneys that are generated in a community should stay in that community by whatever formula it is.

Another question that has to be addressed in certain communities is program funding. Picture this, if you want: A student in London and another one in Niagara Falls have to go to Toronto to get a grade 12 options because their formula doesn't generate the moneys. You have to have program funding in some localities in northern Ontario for this reason: The economy of the province of Ontario is based on natural resources. The extraction of natural resources now requires a lot fewer people, so that in towns like Gogama and Chapleau you have just a few people with machines that cut down a lot of trees. In mines of Sudbury and smaller communities you have machines that extract a lot of tonnage. Their kids have to get educated.

Our economy is based on natural resources, and children of the young people who extract these natural resources have to be educated to the best of our potential. The best of our potential requires that we do program funding so that if there are only five students in grade 12 in Chapleau, they have program funding and can access a number of courses that they surely would get if they were in London or Niagara Falls. Even though they live far from Toronto, I'm sure somebody would find a way of getting it to them.

De nombreuses inquiétudes ont été soulevées dans la presse et par les associations d'enseignants et de conseils scolaires quant aux pouvoirs de la commission. Étant donné les individus choisis pour la coprésider, cette commission, je ne m'en inquiète pas plus qu'il ne le faut.

Finally, I urge you and the government not to fall for the belief that technology will resolve the problems of geography. Teleconferencing etc is unacceptable as a solution. I have had ample experience, as a founding member of Collège Boréal, with these tools of technology.

The Chair: Could I ask you to sum up, please.

Mr Aubin: Yes. Anyone who tells you that they are satisfactory either does not know better or probably lives in Ottawa.

Merci, Madame la Présidente et vous tous et toutes, membres du groupe, de m'avoir écouté, mais plus important, de m'avoir permis de participer encore une fois à un moment historique de notre nation.

La Présidente : Merci bien, Monsieur Aubin. Je crois qu'on veut que ce soit vraiment un moment historique. Vous l'avez bien dit.

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION, DISTRICT 30

The Chair: Wayne Jackson, welcome. May I say in advance, on behalf of the committee, that we regret that this place is not as accessible as we had hoped. I've had some difficulty getting here. We will make sure next time that this doesn't occur.

Mr Wayne Jackson: Chair, members, thank you very much. My name is Wayne Jackson. I'm president of District 30, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. I'll tell you a little bit about District 30 momentarily. I'm joined in this presentation by Jim Agnew, a colleague from District 30 who serves in the capacity as our provincial councillor. Once again I thank you kindly.

You have a printed submission. I don't intend to go through it, in light of the time assigned. I do, however, want to make some references to it and to add some supplementary comments about our concern regarding Bill 104.

District 30 is the organizational unit of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. It represents the professional and occupational interests of 473 secondary school teachers and education workers employed by the Michipicoten Board of Education, the Central Algoma Board of Education and the Sault Ste Marie Board of Education. These individuals, of course, comprise a significant portion of what might very well become district school board 2.

Already District 30, the small portion that I've shared with you, covers some 300 kilometres. The boundaries proposed for district school board 2 will encompass in addition Chapleau and the North Shore. To give you some idea of the expanse of this board, it would mean a full working day's driving time in very good weather — which means perhaps during the four months of the year that would allow that — from one end of the new board to the other. Regrettably, given cutbacks recently, air transportation and rail transportation are not alternatives.

At the outset, let us register the fact that my members in District 30 are very bitter about the way this government has treated education and education workers. Our anxieties are further aggravated by legislation such as Bill 104 that assault the very basis of Ontario's system of public education. The manner in which the bill was introduced, the intention of the government for speedy passage and the unprecedented scope of its contents are matters we believe should disturb all citizens of a free and democratic country.

Furthermore, we're concerned about the process of public hearings, part of which we're involved in here today. They might be construed as giving merely the appearance of consultation. I would suggest that the allocation of 10 minutes before this committee does nothing to dispel our fears or our conclusion about the perfunctory nature of this process.

1520

In our brief, and I do trust it will be given a thorough read by members of the committee, we note that in Mike Harris's Ontario public education has become simply another victim of a widely publicized and accepted neoconservative agenda. Cuts to such programs as social programs and education are being made at a cost to society which is regrettably hidden and unfortunately very long term.

Ontario's spending, I'm sure you've heard before, compared to other jurisdictions, contrary to data released earlier, is plummeting as the provincial government withdraws funding support from elementary and secondary schools. In 1995-96, five Canadian provinces and territories and 40 American states spent more per pupil than Ontario. That's very regrettable. That's a most disturbing change.

A dramatic indication of the impact of these cutbacks on the classroom is certainly evident from the increase in pupil-to-classroom-teacher ratio. Even when compared with the United States, we find that Ontario has dropped to 45th place when so ranked.

Bill 104 then, together with the fewer hospitals initiative, the fewer patients initiative, the fewer unions initiative, the fewer workers' rights initiative, is rooted in a neoconservative ideology that denigrates government, abandons the unfortunate and the marginalized to the vagaries of free market economies.

If Bill 104 were merely about the orderly transition to a new board structure, a new administrative structure, my members would be relatively at ease with its proposals and its provisions. If the reforms guaranteed that the special status and the needs of Ontario's youth would be protected and maintained, our members would be supportive. Bill 104 is not that, however. It's part and parcel of the most determined cut to funding of Ontario's public education that has ever been experienced. You know full well the figures. Close to \$1 billion has been removed from elementary and secondary school education.

Our brief argues in several sections that Bill 104 transfers effective control of education from the local school board to the authority of the province. With this loss in democratic representation, local communities have been stripped of their right to control our most important resource: the future of our students.

In these new district school boards, who, I ask, in our communities in northern Ontario can afford the time to travel that would be required of these new trustees? A trustee resident in Elliot Lake would need 14 hours of travel to simply attend a meeting in Wawa. It would seem much more advantageous to all that we ensure that local boards have the ability to continue to meet local needs. A portion of the cost of local education must be raised from the local residential and farm property rate and commercial and industrial tax through a mill rate struck by local school boards.

We request that the committee consider no further cuts to the level of funding for Ontario elementary and secondary education. We ask that funding levels be adjusted upwards to reflect increases in enrolment and in the cost of living, and that the real needs of Ontario students be addressed, including population sparsity and the isolate nature of northern communities.

We were indeed shocked, as you can appreciate, by the government-funded study that redefined the classroom. I need not go through the litany of our concerns. I know that members of this committee share them and have heard them before.

Let me note, however, that all activities necessary for the efficient operation of the school, be they psychometrists, principals or vice-principals, and its programs for students must be funded as classroom services. My position and that of my colleagues in District 30 is that the whole school is the classroom.

It appears that at the core of this government's education reform initiative is the implementation, regrettably, of an economic agenda, the evidence of which is far too prevalent, that is shifting wealth to the corporate world where it is taxed very little, if at all, and where it does not contribute its fair share to the wellbeing and social fabric of this province.

The main tenets of Bill 104 present us with a path to a divided and elitist society in which the rich retreat to the comfort of the guarded and gated communities while the rest of the citizens of Ontario struggle to survive with ever-diminishing social and public services.

We implore the provincial government to rededicate itself to support public education. There must be no further reduction to government funding for school boards. School councils, we declare, cannot be substitutes for democratically constituted and accountable school trustees. The powers and focus of the responsibility of school advisory councils should remain advisory under the authority of local school boards.

That concludes my remarks. I'm going to ask my colleague if he might, if you would indulge us, make a few concluding remarks.

The Chair: You have one minute left.

Mr Jim Agnew: I don't think I can add too much to what Wayne has said. We are concerned of course too about employee rights in amalgamated boards. We have included in our brief a set of protocols in the appendices that would provide the basis for beginning to do something about employee rights. In previous amalgamations the rights of employees in existing collective agreements were adequately provided for in legislation.

We're concerned that what we're going to end up with in northern Ontario is not shared education resources, that we're going to end up with shared poverty. That is a very real concern of our membership. To add to what Wayne said, we think the new boards of education will be a shadow of governance, will just be a very pale shadow of what should be there for education governance in a community.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Agnew and Mr Jackson, for coming here and sharing your views with us.

RAY PORATTO

The Chair: Ray Poratto is next. Welcome, Mr Poratto.

Mr Ray Poratto: I'm pleased to see the number of MLAs who have returned to the table. I was getting to suspect that maybe they were on four-martini lunch hours or some such thing, so I'm pleased to see they returned.

My name is Ray Poratto. I want to give you a short backgrounder and give you some idea of where I'm coming

from on this question. My experience in terms of background is of course that I have been through the education system locally. I have seven children who have been through the education system locally. I now have eight grandchildren who are in the education system locally. So from the perspective of experience with the local education system, I count up about 132-odd school years that I've had some participation in.

I'm a taxpayer to the school system for the past 48 years, both residential and commercial. I've been an employer in small business for 35-odd years, dealing extensively with graduates and failures and outcomes of the system, employing anywhere from three to 103 people over various years over various businesses. I have no relationship to anyone employed in the education system at the present time and I have no provincial political party office, so I come here as an independent, I hope without bias, wanting to reflect on some of this system as I see it.

At the outset I want to tell you very clearly that my viewpoint, from all of my experience and background, is that this legislation is a godsend. This legislation was long overdue. We've been handicapped as a society to compete globally and nationally by the failings of the present system. We have not achieved the benefits that could be ours in education in this province.

Let me tell you something about outcomes. That's a new word that's been coined. As an employer, I can't tell you how many times I was disappointed with the outcomes of the system that sent workers to me who lacked the three Rs, and you know what I'm talking about there. I had to spend much time, much money in a small business that is in a very competitive field to do the work that I believe should have been done in the system, but it wasn't done.

1530

Item, Toronto Star last week: "Why are our kids at the bottom of the class in science?" And later on it describes in math. It talks about the probe urged into what's going on in the classroom. That comment has been repeated you know how many times over and over across this province for a number of years that I have observed.

From the standpoint of my seven children and my eight grandchildren I can tell you that for the amount of money we spend on education they deserve better. Our cost per student, as you're well aware, is among the highest, if not the highest in the country.

Local education taxes have been increased every year over the past many, many years to support a system that is failing. In excess of inflation these increases occurred — and hear this one, Ms McLeod — at a time of declining enrolment. One small business operator commented to me: "The cost is the highest and the outcomes are among the lowest. Go figure." Can you hear me, Ms Martel?

Ms Martel: Yes, provincial enrolment is going up.

Mr Poratto: Oh, I'm glad. I'm glad. I didn't think you could hear me if you were talking. You'd have difficulty doing both. I have.

Ms Martel: I think we have a difference of opinion on your figures.

Mr Poratto: A small business proprietor observed, "The system operates, for example, 182.5 days of the year." That's less than half-time. That's part-time. He operates his business 315 days of the year and more recently he's going

to have to operate it 365 days of the year because of Sunday openings. That's why I guess those small business operators are called the engine of the economy. Let me tell you something about the engine: It's sputtering under the load of the tax-imposed system that is the result of the trustees system.

I look at another aspect of the system where I have to take employees and console them; for example, the working moms I have had in my operations over the years, struggling through school holidays, through PD days, through summer holidays, through early release days and on and on. They've had a great deal of difficulty. The trustees have been part of that process.

I believe the provincial government is better positioned to match the powerful bureaucracy, the powerful education bureaucracy, the powerful school teachers' unions that have imposed this kind of schedule on the trustees.

I want to give you an example I alluded to the other day that was brought to my attention when we talk about the trustees system as it existed. Teachers' pension plan: \$43.5 billion in its coffers and growing every day, attained through the legalized extortion at the bargaining table. Now they're buying up shopping malls, hockey arenas, and I understand from one banker recently that they're circling a couple of banks. Compare that with our beleaguered CPP plan to look after the other 30 million Canadians.

That's the kind of system the trustees system has developed. Obscene, you say? No, but badly needing fixing. I say remove the taxing authority from the school boards, put it in the hands of the people who have the same kind of power that is brought to the table by these other two groups I mentioned. The trustees system has grown obsolete.

I sympathize with many of them. I heard them over the years complain about they only control 20% of the budget, the roof repairs and the boiler repairs each year when they do the budget. The other 80% is locked into salaries and collective bargaining agreements. I had to observe very conveniently that they were the guys who sat at the table and did the bargaining, but they were no match for the big, powerful groups I mentioned previously.

The Chair: Mr Poratto, could I ask you to wind up?

Mr Poratto: I'll just be another half a minute. Our city council, on the other hand, has very effectively held the tax line through the past six years. So I believe sincerely that it takes the power of the provincial government to correct this situation.

I say to Minister Snobelen, congratulations. I'm sorry he isn't here today. I don't think he's here. I don't know him to see. Congratulations in any event —

Mr Skarica: I'll pass it on.

Mr Poratto: — for having the courage to take on this situation.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Poratto, for your views and for being here today.

WALTER MacLEOD

The Chair: Walter MacLeod, Mr MacLeod, welcome to our committee. We're delighted to have you and we're looking forward to your presentation.

Mr Walter MacLeod: I'm one of those irresponsible trustees, Madam Chair.

The Chair: I won't comment. You have 10 minutes for your presentation and if time permits, the committee will ask questions.

Mr MacLeod: My name's Walter MacLeod. I'm a trustee of the Sudbury Board of Education. I have 11 years' board experience from 1961 to 1972, was reappointed to the board in 1992 and re-elected in 1994. I've served as board chairman twice, was vice-president of the trustees' association and trustees' council. I'm currently chair of the Sudbury board local education improvement committee and the salary committee.

This will be my third involvement with the consolidation of boards: in 1961 with the amalgamation of the then city of Sudbury and McKim township, and the 1969 consolidation of Ontario school boards.

Many statements have been made by various organizations and individuals concerning the consolidation of school boards. The opposition supports changes in administration, but objects to the undemocratic and paternalistic way in which the government has proceeded. The third party says the government is preoccupied with the structure at the expense of equality. Trustees and trustee organizations have expressed concerns that with fewer trustees and larger units of administration, many small municipalities will not be represented, and federations have stated that the reorganization of boards may dilute the quality of education.

If that sounds familiar, it should because those statements were made in 1968 prior to the amalgamation of boards into the present structure. What is interesting is the attempt to preserve the present structure which was previously so highly disparaged.

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation should be ashamed of their decisions to threaten legal action in a futile attempt to prevent passage of Bill 104.

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association is virtually 100% funded by Ontario school taxes and had the nerve to ask boards for a special assessment to mount a legal action. I'm pleased to say that many boards have refused the request. The federation derives its funds from teachers' dues which are tax deductible and therefore a large amount of their funding is paid by taxpayers. If these, and others, have real concerns about the impact of Bill 104 on the system, why do they not make a genuine effort to assist in implementing the bill?

1540

Maintaining the status quo means precious tax dollars would continue to be used in very large amounts for non-classroom functions. I'll give you a small example. Some trustees cost their boards more than the starting salary of two teachers. That's insignificant when the entire provincial education budget is considered, but having negotiated salary settlements at both the local and provincial levels, let me assure you that two more teachers are mighty important when negotiating a staffing formula or a pupil-teacher ratio, far more important than a trustee.

What are the priorities? First the students, then surely it's got to be the classroom teacher; not a department head, principal, superintendent, federation, trustee, or trustees' organizations.

The major criticisms of Bill 104 have been centred around how data were collected, what is included in

classroom cost and the alleged transfer of responsibilities to school councils — all, in my opinion, superficial complaints raised mainly for political or self-interest reasons. I therefore urge the government to get on with Bill 104. Do not slow down the process. Calls for a longer period of time for more study come from those with self-interest who want to stop the bill, not offer improvements.

Can you really believe that with over 100 directors of education, a similar number of superintendents of business, together with their staffs, plus hundreds of trustees, more time is needed? Major business mergers are accomplished with far less knowledgeable assistance. I also find it strange that some of the most self-interested complain about morale problems among their staffs because of uncertainty created by Bill 104, yet they want the process extended — disingenuous, to say the least.

In the 1969 consolidation of boards, the Sudbury Board of Education had to deal with the amalgamation of 32 boards, and you heard something about that with our board chairman this morning and Ernie. Only two had superintendents of education — the Sudbury high school board and the Sudbury public school board — vastly diverse salary schedules, undefined working conditions, many unqualified teachers teaching on letters of permission, almost 30,000 students and the displacement of a couple of hundred trustees. Was it easy? Certainly not, but in the years following, the trustees, officials and staff put a system in place — lots of work but lots of accomplishment. I can't tell you it was without problems, but the problems were resolved.

It has puzzled me that reactions to changes in the education system are most vociferous when it comes to board restructuring, school closings and so on. Many changes which have had a much more direct effect on students are seldom discussed or challenged. Just as an aside, we had a period for six months for people to come to board meetings and ask questions. Not one person showed up.

Where was the outrage when boards and educators decided to construct schools without walls? I was involved in that stupid decision. Where were the opponents of learning by discovery, the so-called new math, whole language to teach reading skills, de-emphasis of technical training and physical education —

Mr Bartolucci: We were there.

Mr MacLeod: That's right, you were there — all decisions which had a greater effect on students than the currently proposed consolidation of boards?

I now have grandchildren in the local system and I want to advise you that they, as all students, contrary to what you've just heard, are being well served. Contrary to the attention-grabbing comments, students by grade 2 read, they perform advanced math functions, they use computers and they are more aware than ever. Teachers are well trained and performing well. Of course there are no headlines in affirming a job well done.

Complaints about education usually pertain to busing — too much; to two systems of education — there should only be one; discipline — too little; and taxes — too high. It seems that what is taught is of minor importance, or is it generally well accepted? Quite possibly parents on the whole are satisfied with the education their children are

receiving. Board structure and the method of financing have little to do with a student's day-to-day education. It's the teacher who counts.

To ascertain a trustee's importance to education, ask any ratepayer the name of their trustee. For that matter, ask them to name any trustee. Trustees are quite often elected because of the position of their name on a ballot. Understand that about 70% of ratepayers in this area do not have children attending elementary or secondary school in either system. The trustees set and implement policy, approve budgets and staffing and act as a board of governors. They should not attempt to micro-manage the system. That's the job of the educators.

I'm always perturbed when I see a comment by a trustee or an association saying that something needs to be done "for the kids." The "for the kids" comment is often used to promote something trendy which may very well not be in the interest of the kids. It ranks close to the current buzzword "scary." When opposed to something such as Bill 104, with little to support their opposition, opponents blurt out, "It's scary." It's used almost as often as "at the end of the day."

I suggest to you that in January 1998, when staff and students return to class, they will carry on with a good educational system and the system will not be disrupted, but over time will be improved by Bill 104.

When I review Bill 104 and the comments of its opponents, their biggest objection seems to be the control in the hands of the Education Improvement Commission. It's not control to which they object, simply who will exercise it. Bill 104 does not refer to education finance reform as this will be addressed in other legislation, nor does it deal with collective bargaining.

Having spent some time with the co-chairs of the commission, I remain convinced that, on the whole, Bill 104 and follow-up legislation regarding finance and collective bargaining will not harm students' education now or in the future but will do what it's intended to do: control costs and put more emphasis on the classroom where it belongs.

Do the critics really believe that the EIC, or local education improvement committees, will attempt to destroy Ontario's education system? Will critics of the education system be mollified after all the changes are made? Absolutely not. Everyone has, and will continue to have, an opinion on what should or should not be done to "improve" the system.

Based on 15 years of board of education experience and two reorganizations, in my opinion Bill 104 is a good start to an improved system for students. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr MacLeod, thank you very much for your very lucid and comprehensive presentation.

RONALD ROSS

The Chair: Is Mr Ross here? Welcome, Mr Ross. We're pleased to have you with us this afternoon.

Mr Bartolucci: Ron, are you still assigned to Richard Penney? Are you still a policeman?

Mr Ronald Ross: I'm still a policeman.

First I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

Mr O'Toole: May I have your name?

Mr Ross: I'm Ronald Ross. I come to the board as a student. I'd like to explain why I decided to come to speak to this committee and why I became interested in this particular piece of legislation and other education reforms.

A few weeks ago I heard a radio advertisement on a local radio station, and the commercial included a little boy telling a sad story. The little boy described that there were 31 other students in his classroom and he was not getting the attention he needed. He also proceeded to blame Mike Harris and the government for this problem.

At this point I recalled my primary school education and remembered that the numbers of students in my classes ranged between 28 and 33. That was 10 to 20 years ago. It's obvious that this radio commercial was a flat-out lie and that this problem has been around for many years. I heard that this commercial was put on by unions and I understood that this was a ploy to attack the government to meet its own agendas. This lie infuriated me so much that I proceeded to find out what this education reform was all about.

I'm not an education specialist or an economist, but when reviewing the material, it only seemed to make sense. First I found out that the problems with the education system were around for many years and that there were two royal commissions, 10 commissions and committees, two fact-finding reports and two panels since 1950 that have investigated the problems. It seemed that this government is the first that is dedicated enough to pursue these reforms despite these different types of commercials on radio stations and attempts by special interest groups to throw off its pursuits.

1550

After my research, two things surprised me and convinced me that the system is wrong and the proposed system is better. The first is that not all students are funded equally. I agree that the same amount of money should be spent on each average student, and that if there are any special circumstances, there should be funding set aside for them. I think this bill before us will achieve that.

The most surprising thing I discovered was that spending in the classroom was as high as 73% and as low as 51%. I took this figure to include the buildings, desks, books and teachers, so I was trying to find out what made up the difference. To me, the difference represented administration costs. Again, I'm not a statistician or a business expert, but does that not translate to 27% or 49% administration costs?

I'm sure there are not too many businesses around that can run with a 49% administration cost. To me, a 49% administration cost is just too high; there's probably a lot of fat to be trimmed there. With the cutting of the number of school boards and trustees, whose salaries reach up to \$50,000 a year, to a \$5,000 honorarium, there would probably be great savings. With the amalgamation of school boards, we could probably realize saving with economies of scale that would include board offices, curriculum development and payroll.

I'd like to say that I agree with the bill, and it's about time. Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Ross. We have a few minutes left for questioning, about two minutes per caucus.

Mr Skarica: Perhaps I can ask a question then, sir. We heard from the Lakehead board yesterday that many of the trustees felt they had no real role and that they were just a rubber stamp of the administrative budgets and so on and so forth. Would you care to comment on that? In your experience, is that accurate or would you have sufficient experience with the system to comment?

Mr Ross: Just on the research I've done, it seemed there were certain powers given to the boards and they don't seem to have done a very good job of it. Now that we've taken it away from them, it seems like they're crying. If you didn't do a good job out in the business world, you'd probably be fired or downgraded, and it seems that's what's happening.

Mr Skarica: One of the concerns we've heard here in northern Ontario is that the boards are going to be too large for trustees to be able to adequately represent their constituencies. Would you care to comment on that?

Mr Ross: It seems that with new technologies you don't need a face-to-face meeting. With conference calls and videoconferencing and e-mail and the Internet you can pretty much set up a meeting without travelling seven hours away or whatever. You could just do some conference calls and get the same work done.

Mr Duncan: Would you say that any savings that would be realized by cutting the fat out of administration should be reinvested in the classroom?

Mr Ross: I would prefer to see the cutting of trustees and adding teachers.

Mr Duncan: So you'd see it reinvested in the classroom.

Mr Ross: Exactly, yes.

Mr Duncan: You're aware that the bill doesn't address that issue at all?

Mr Ross: Which issue is that?

Mr Duncan: The reinvestment in the classroom.

Mr Ross: I understand that, yes.

Mr Duncan: The figure, by the way, that the ministry published — I'm not sure for your specific board — for administration is not 49% or 50%. It's more in the range of 18% to 20% in most average school boards in Ontario.

So you're content, then, simply to keep Ontario the 46th jurisdiction in North America, in terms of per pupil spending? Do you think that will keep us competitive to the 21st century and give young people an opportunity to advance?

Mr Ross: I think that the way the system is now, we're really too top-heavy.

Mr Duncan: Even if we can agree on that —

The Chair: Let him finish.

Mr Duncan: Yes, but that's not answering my question, with all due respect. Even if we agree on that, wouldn't you say then that we should be reinvesting those savings in students and in the classroom?

Mr Ross: I agree with that, yes.

Mr Duncan: So you would say the bill is flawed because it doesn't demonstrate that?

Ms Martel: He said the bill did.

Mr Duncan: He did. That's why I asked him the question.

Mr Ross: The bill dealing with funding?

Mr Duncan: It doesn't deal with it.

Mr Ross: I was speaking in a little broader sense, but I was talking about education reforms as a whole. I under-

stand that this is just on the one bill, and when I started doing my research, I was doing it on all the proposed education reforms. I'm sorry if I misled anyone on that.

Mr Wildman: If you feel a little cool in here it's because the committee just wanted to give everyone the experience of what it would be like if you actually defined a classroom the way the government does, because they don't include heat and light. We did include light, but we didn't include heat today.

The Chair: That's not entirely true, Mr Wildman.

Mr Ross: I wasn't exactly sure what the numbers represented.

Mr Wildman: When you said the numbers of 40% to 50% and so on, it doesn't include heat and light. It doesn't include custodial. You said you thought it would include the building; it doesn't. It doesn't include principals, vice-principals, librarians, all those things, and the bill doesn't deal with funding. But you indicated that you thought Bill 104 would help to free up money for the classroom. Could you tell me where in the bill you found that? I've been looking for it?

Mr Ross: My understanding of it was that if we're going to —

Mr Wildman: Sorry, what section of the bill or what part of the bill are you referring to?

Mr Ross: Oh, I don't have —

Mr O'Toole: Madam Chair, I resent the fact, if I may intervene, that he's cross-examining a presenter who's — we've not cross-examined one teacher, and this bill doesn't deal with collective bargaining either. He's just a citizen. He has a right to express his opinion. I think you're out of order.

The Chair: You are out of order.

Mr Wildman: I rest my case.

The Chair: Mr Ross, is there anything you want to add?

Mr Ross: I forgot the question, actually. I wasn't exactly sure how the numbers that were published were calculated. I just kind of inferred.

The Chair: Mr Ross, we want to thank you for coming here. It cannot be easy to come before a committee of this kind as a student who has done the research you've been able to do. We really appreciate that you took the time to come.

While our next presenter is making his way to the front, I should explain that it is indeed cold in here, but the reason it's cold is that the heaters in this area interfere with the technical equipment because they are so loud.

Mr Wildman: I thought it was because you redefined what is committee work.

The Chair: You can reinterpret it any way you want, but the reality is, that is why the room is unduly cold. Hopefully it will speed us along and we'll not have so many interjections from members.

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION, DISTRICT 31

The Chair: I call the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation; Alexander Bass, president. Welcome. We're delighted to have you here.

Mr Alexander Bass: Good afternoon. My name is Alexander Bass. I am president of District 31 OSSTF

Sudbury. My co-presenter is Joe Meuleman, who is the chair of our contract maintenance committee.

First, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for my being able to make this presentation before the committee. I'll keep my comments as brief as I can. Hopefully, there will be a chance for some questions at the end of my presentation.

In common with many of the presentations you've already heard, both on this date and earlier, the members of District 31 of OSSTF — teachers, school support staff and professional service staff — have a number of concerns, with both the legislation as outlined in Bill 104 and the implications that lie behind it.

1600

While we lack the time to go into depth with our concerns, we would like to address four areas in particular: the extremely short time for public input into this legislation; the extraordinary speed with which this legislation will need to be applied; the terms of reference for the Education Improvement Commission; and the issue of implied costs and savings.

Dealing with the first issue, the style of the current government in its rapid-fire action, from the first official announcement to the end of the time for consultation, is one with which we are becoming distressingly familiar. Within this school year we have had to deal with the proposed secondary education reform, the Paroian commission on teachers' collective bargaining, and now this particular legislation. Further, we are well aware that, as the bill states, further legislation and regulations to implement the legislation and the proposed changes in education financing will all be descending on us.

As employees in the education system, we believe it is both our right and our duty to give a thoughtful and well-considered response to all of these matters. As teachers, we would be considered negligent in our duties if we did not give our students, at the beginning of a course, a clear outline of both the content and the expectations they were required to meet. Altering the agenda every month or so, and on top of that expecting students to meet a new set of conditions on short notice, would be considered poor teaching indeed. Yet this is exactly the way that the entire education system is being dealt with by this government.

This committee held its first hearing only a month ago. The timetable for hearings outside of Toronto was not available until even later, and confirmation of our opportunity to make this presentation was received less than two weeks ago, which was the last day before the beginning of our March break.

We know that Bill 104 and the other changes to the education system that will follow from it will have very direct implications to the work environment of all employees in the education system, yet we have been given very little of substance on the nature of many of these changes. Even if it becomes clear very quickly after this bill is adopted, there is not enough time between then and the end of 1997 to study and to give a considered response. Therefore, we propose that the implementation of this legislation must be delayed for at least a year, and perhaps until the next round of municipal and board elections after 1998.

There is also the issue of the very short time, once the legislation is adopted, to put into place all the mechanisms

required to implement it. We are already one quarter of the way through 1997, yet current school boards will not even be able to implement final budgets until this legislation is passed and the EIC approves them.

Municipal and school board elections in November require nominations by early October. Before that occurs, the structures of the new boards must be defined and the number, distribution and responsibilities of the trustees need to be outlined. Or perhaps the hapless candidates for the positions will be asked to offer themselves up for election without knowing what they are getting into, except for the fact that they will have more responsibility, will have no power to raise funds, will represent a far more diverse constituency and will do this all for less pay.

A merger of school boards is more than just a matter of extending the jurisdiction of a given board over a wider area. The issue becomes even more complicated when the merger is to occur at the start of a calendar year. At the secondary school level, where many schools operate on a semester system, which divides the school year at the end of January, the issue becomes yet more difficult. Athletic schedules and system-wide events, such as science fairs, mathematics competitions, writing competitions etc, are all based on current jurisdictions. There will be little or no time to consider the changes needed to accommodate the new board structures.

At present, school boards are submitting to the Ministry of Education their outlines for the 1997-98 school year structure, dates for professional activity days, school holidays and exam times. There will not even be an opportunity to arrange for coordinated professional activity days between boards that will be operating as one board starting in January 1998.

A matter of grave concern to us as employees is the way in which the variety of collective agreements, conditions of work and current board policies will be treated. Already the legislation has implications for issues which employees will have to consider within the next few months. As the staff changes are being made for the 1997-98 school year, what happens to their place of work in January? In Sudbury we have had a history of staff transfers between the French- and English-language sections of the Sudbury Board of Education. With the implied division that will occur in January, how will employees who have made such changes be treated? Will the merged boards be required to maintain separate payrolls, benefit levels and benefit carriers, seniority and transfer rights after January, and for how long?

Again the issue of time to consider all these matters and to plan appropriately for them becomes critical. Again we propose that the implementation date of January 1998 is much too early and must be delayed.

We understand that many of the questions we have raised above will, we are told, be dealt with by the Education Improvement Commission. Yet this body is not even in place, let alone staffed to deal with these matters in the very short time that will be available to them.

But we have a further concern with the commission, especially with the wide-ranging powers and responsibilities given to it in its terms of reference outlined in section 335. Of special concern are those powers granted to the commission that extend well beyond the task of overseeing

the orderly merger of school boards. For both teacher and non-teacher members of District 31, perhaps most frightening is clause (f): "...make recommendations to the minister on how to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards."

When this is combined with statements from the minister and the ministry on its definitions of what is considered "inside" and "outside" the classroom, many members, both teaching and non-teaching, see their jobs in jeopardy. If jobs are outsourced, what will happen to those currently holding them? What will happen to their salaries, pensions, all the matters that we have worked so hard to obtain in previously negotiated agreements?

Most important of all, what impact will all this have on the students, who should be the primary focus of the entire education restructuring? A school is much more than a teacher standing in front of her or his class. The support of an active and involved administration, a knowledgeable and experienced office staff and a trustworthy and familiar custodial staff are all very important components. At a time when we hear more and more frightening tales of adults who take advantage of children, will our schools be looked after by an uninvolved and frequently changing staff? Will the "outside the classroom" component, which includes administration, library, guidance, office and custodial services, we're told, consist of workers from some type of external temporary agency with no real loyalties to the school or the students?

All of these matters are subject only to the EIC, since a reading of the bill indicates that they are subject to no one except the minister. We propose that the powers of the Education Improvement Commission should be limited strictly to those matters involving the implementation of changes to the school board structures and should be subject to the usual challenges and reviews common to any government agency or commission.

While this does not nearly exhaust our concerns with this legislation and its implications for education in Ontario, as a final issue let us address our concerns to the matters of finance. It is clear that one of the primary motivations behind this and many of the other changes being considered for education are driven primarily, not by a desire to improve the system of education provided to our students, but by a search for financial savings.

To take our area as an example, it is hard to see where the savings will occur. Instead of fewer boards, the Sudbury region, currently the responsibility of two, the public and separate boards, will now be covered by four: English public, French public, English separate and French separate. Instead of making cost savings and the integration of such matters as busing, central purchasing, common maintenance and other central services easier, this will become more difficult than ever. Anyone under the misapprehension that creating these four entities will not result in the creation of four distinct, separate bureaucracies must be dreaming of some Utopian future.

Add to this the cost of administration of school boards spread over immense geographic regions, along with an additional layer of bureaucracy implicit in the creation of the Education Improvement Commission, and it's hard to see where the cost savings are to be realized. A wise entrepreneur might be well advised to get into the charter

air service to allow school board administration and trustees in some of these proposed northern boards to do their work.

Beyond the direct savings that Bill 104 is supposed to generate from the merger of boards, there is a much wider and more frightening implication of the money that may or may not be made available, at the sole discretion of the ministry, to operate these schools. In a province with the size and diversity of Ontario, it will require the wisdom of a Solomon to come up with a funding formula that deals fairly with the special needs in all the different areas and the speed of Superman to do this by January 1998.

Even with years of experience with the present system, it is acknowledged that the general legislative grants currently made to school boards still leave inequalities in the system. At least some of these inequalities are in turn addressed by boards through their local taxation powers. With the limited time available to the ministry and the commission to create the new funding models, we foresee, at minimum, several years of chaos. We propose that much more time is needed to implement any changes and that local school boards must be allowed to have some local taxing powers to address the needs of their constituencies.

In summary, it is our view that Bill 104 is too ambitious and leaves too many questions unanswered, with not enough time to give proper consideration to all the follow-up matters that will need to be addressed before it can be implemented. It is for these reasons that we stand opposed to this legislation.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Bass and Mr Meuleman. You've exhausted your time. We thank you for the presentation you made for us today.

The Chair: We'll try. Mike Whittle? He's not here yet. He is on my list to call from time to time. I didn't see anyone new coming in.

1610

LASALLE SECONDARY SCHOOL PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Chair: I call Lasalle Secondary School Parent Advisory Council, Dr Sylvia Thornburg. Dr Thornburg, thank you very much for being here.

Dr Sylvia Thornburg: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Like the others here, I'm grateful for the opportunity to address this committee on behalf of the Lasalle Secondary School Parent Advisory Council. Your committee has heard many presentations today and previously, and you will be hearing more still. I'm sure all of us hope that you consider your time well spent and that you will incorporate those ideas you consider worthy before any final action is taken on this bill.

Each speaker coming before you represents one or more vested interests in education. I am no exception. The Lasalle parent council, of which I am a co-chairman, consists of a parent majority plus school and community personnel, many of whom are also parents. To state the obvious, we are first and foremost advocates for our children, thus high-quality, effective education is a high priority. We are also taxpayers, so we are strongly in favour of dollars being spent efficiently and accountably. Given all that, Bill 104, an act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school

system, should be music to our ears. Regrettably, there are some very sour notes.

Simply stating that the bill's purpose is to improve accountability doesn't make it so. In fact, we believe the opposite is true. This bill virtually eliminates accountability. This is one of two major flaws we believe the bill has. The second is an extraordinary lack of clarity regarding vital portions of the legislation. The two difficulties are correlated since, when roles of the various participants in the educational system aren't sufficiently defined, accountability becomes difficult to assign.

But we'll start with the question of accountability. Simply put, where is it? If the transition period before the amalgamation of current school boards takes place, decisions must be made regarding many critical and potentially contentious issues, especially where individual schools are leaving a board: equitable allocation of reserve funds, property, assets, staffing. In addition, a new funding formula will allocate dollars differently in the future. If the Premier's stated intentions are fulfilled, further cuts to education will mean less to allocate overall in coming years.

The body designated to make these far-ranging decisions is the new Education Improvement Commission, its members appointed, not elected, by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The two co-chairs of this five- to seven-member commission are also given those roles by appointment. In fact, two individuals, Ms Ann Vanstone and Mr David Cooke, are serving already as ministry consultants, or commission co-chairs-in-waiting, if you prefer, until Bill 104 receives royal assent.

This commission is being given absolute power to carry out its sweeping roles with no appeal or court review. This commission, created by pen stroke and with an expiration date already set, has no accountability to anyone. To set up such a body might make sense in a totalitarian regime or a secret brotherhood, but it is profoundly inappropriate in a democratic society's most fundamental endeavour: the education of its youth.

When someone actually decides upon the precise wording of legislation, the process must be driven, we think, by particular thoughts in the minds of the writers. Some of the results make us very curious, not to mention suspicious, as to what the authors of this legislation were thinking. What motivated the minister and his staff to believe his commission might need this extraordinary immunity to appeals and court action?

Yes, surely the stakes and emotions will run high in some of the decisions to be made, but that makes a judicial review of the commission's actions even more necessary. Not to allow for it is an affront to all of us with vested interests: parents, students, teachers and all other staff members, board members, and taxpayers at large.

Mr David Cooke was asked during the hearing regarding his appointment as co-chair of the commission about the necessity of having financial supervision of the school boards during the coming transition period. Mr Cooke indicated that such controls would be necessary. He said: "The only way it works currently is through accountability. Accountability doesn't exist when, of the boards that are there now, many will not exist on January 1, 1998, and those trustees will not have to run for re-election because

there won't be a board to run for re-election to. So if there's not democratic accountability, there has to be some imposed by the ministry."

He seems to have missed the enormous irony of his reply. Perhaps because of the pressures of his appointment hearing, he failed to note that the commission members don't run for any election at all and never will. It may be argued that this commission will be accountable because it is subject to sufficient ongoing scrutiny and feedback to ensure sound and equitable decisions. We can't say. Even if all its meetings are open to the public, for most of us here it will be a decidedly awkward commute.

I'd like to change the focus of these remarks now and address the second of our concerns: clarity. Parts of this legislation are generating the impression that something is about to be done to us, but we're not at all sure what. It should not come as a surprise to anyone here that stakeholders in a field as complex as education will tend to oppose or at least be uneasy about the many components of this legislation that convey this impression.

It's not the first time we've had this reaction. In fact, the minister's efforts towards educational reform are beginning to fall into a troubling pattern. They seem to involve large-scale initiatives, precipitous timetables for implementation and hasty arrangements for feedback and hearings. Next, we get, often at the last minute, documents containing heavy doses of unassailable generalizations:

"An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness, and quality of Ontario's school system" — how can you argue with that?

"...students better prepared for the workforce or further education." Sounds good to me.

"...a high-quality education system based on a relevant and challenging curriculum." Absolutely.

However, the documentation is so lacking in critical details that reasonable judgements about it are virtually impossible.

Last November, our parent advisory council began to consider the ministry proposal on high school reform. By the way, the proposal is titled *Excellence in Education*, another of those neat phrases that get thrown around without any definitive detail. Our parent council wrestled at length with those documents. We sent two letters to Mr Snobelen and Mr Harris asking first for more time and, second, for answers to over three pages of questions. We struggled at length to understand, interpret and respond constructively to the proposal. It was a profoundly frustrating, unsuccessful exercise. We just recently received the minister's response, a form note which thanked us perfunctorily for our input in spite of the fact that we hadn't yet given him any. I guess we're even; he hasn't given us any either.

Now we're trying to comprehend Bill 104, as well as the implications of its companion legislation moving educational funding out of the local tax base and into the provincial domain. Lack of clarity once again raises huge questions. First, the two pieces of legislation are inextricably linked and should be considered simultaneously. However, we've only got one piece of the puzzle, and we're not sure what parts of it mean.

What exactly isn't clear?

(1) Nothing in Bill 104 explains how either the effectiveness or quality of education will be improved, as its

opening statement claims. Making fewer school boards means trustees are farther removed from their constituents, either by sheer numeric ratios or by huge chunks of geography. How does this help?

(2) What are the intentions behind the new commission's mandate to make recommendations regarding the "strengthening of the role of school councils over time" and "increasing parental involvement in education governance"? We note that the last term is "governance," not an advisory role. What are we to surmise? In fact, school council roles currently vary from actually hiring principals in some jurisdictions to not even being established in others. But what about the future? Extreme projections include the complete demise of school boards, with school councils somehow taking over the entire role. Why not state the intentions more clearly?

1620

(3) What is the role of the local education improvement committees? We can see that the legislation specifies the utterly vague tasks noted in section 338(7)(a) to (e), which can be paraphrased as "anything the commission wants." However, what did the legislation intend? How do these committees interact with the current and future boards? Are the members paid? How are these committees constituted, and who determines their membership? Someone must know something about this, since our local board has already picked three of their own to be on that committee. Mr Walter MacLeod has just identified himself as the chairman of that body. Presumably they realize where the power is going to be, but it leaves the rest of us wondering about procedures.

(4) Both clarity and accountability are fuzzy in the statements by Ms Vanstone and Mr Cooke, the future commission co-chairs, who maintain that local boards will still be in control and be accountable for the running of the school systems. How that is so remains a mystery to us.

(5) The still undefined funding formula is fundamental to determining whether sufficient dollars will enable education quality to be maintained in any given board. Why can't passage of Bill 104 be delayed until that formula can at least be examined?

By the way on this last point, if any of you have any influence, at Lasalle Secondary we're really hoping for sufficient supplies dollars that the teachers can stop stealing chalk from each other, and it would be a bonus if students could spend less time copying information from overhead projections — the cost of Xeroxing, of course, limits the distribution of copies — and many of us in this room would prefer not to have to buy all those things that our kids and neighbours' kids sell in their fund-raising efforts.

More seriously, we have two recommendations we believe you should implement. First — you've heard this before — slow down. More clarity must be offered in this legislation before it is rammed through third reading. Stakeholders in the education process need to understand what is really being proposed. The debate over the merits of the legislation would make a great deal more sense, and perhaps be less acrimonious, if the legislation were clear prior to its passage. Wouldn't it make more sense to do the required homework first? Someone, for example, took the time to determine the detailed boundaries of the 66 school boards defined by the new legislation. That was considered

sufficiently vital to pin down ahead of time. Please fill in some of the other blanks.

Frankly, it would seem that each of you would be in a better position to defend your votes to your constituents if you could explain precisely what impact you anticipate locally. Can you envision a situation where you are questioned after the bill results in big hits to your riding? "Gee I didn't realize that's what would happen," is not a vote-getting comeback.

Second, section 344, dealing with immunity for the commission, doesn't belong in any legislation dealing with education. Take it out.

Passage of this bill as it stands, with its companion legislation removing education taxation and funding from the local level, will result in the following: an appointed Education Improvement Commission with virtually unlimited powers to restructure the most fundamental aspects of funding, governance and accountability for education, and to do so with absolute impunity; an appointed education improvement committee for every board, with an unknown makeup and with completely unspecified powers and roles, subject only to the commission; and a presently unknown provincial funding formula for education which will inevitably result in unpredictable shifts of millions of dollars throughout the Ontario boards.

If no answers are yet available on these last two items, then we assert that to predict the impact this bill will have on any of your local constituencies is impossible. Ladies and gentlemen, it follows very simply that a vote for Bill 104 as it stands is indefensible. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr Thornburg. We have time for one very brief question per caucus. I say that for their benefit and not yours.

Mrs McLeod: A brief question. I'm one of those who believes that at the extreme this could be the beginning of the dissolution of school boards, almost by default if not by intent, which leaves school councils, again by default if not by intent, in the position of having to be the sole advocates for the children in their particular schools. I would ask you the question I've asked of other school council members: In addition to the responsibilities of managing the school, do you think school councils can lobby effectively with Queen's Park in order to ensure that their students are going to receive the education they need?

Dr Thornburg: Absolutely not. Not only that, I don't believe we can effectively manage the schools. Parents are not there to do that. They are not, by definition, with few exceptions, trained educators. That's just not what we're there for.

Ms Martel: We will be moving an amendment to take out the fact that the commission doesn't have to stand any legal or any other type of court challenge. But I wanted to ask you, as a result of everything you've seen, do you not worry that before this is all through you will end up with a whole new set of rules and responsibilities because of the downloading of this, either because there will be fewer trustees or less staff at any of the boards across the province?

Dr Thornburg: It's a worry in theory. I think functionally that cannot happen because I don't think parent councils are constituted in such a way that they can do that. I don't think parents are willing or equipped — and

certainly not for free, to be blunt — to take that on. It's inappropriate.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much for a thoughtful and sometimes humorous, I believe, presentation.

Dr Thornburg: Thank you. I can use a break now and then.

Mr O'Toole: Yes, that's right. And very informative. I just wanted to ask one question, and sincerely: On page 3 at the bottom, you say in some humorous way, "Stop the teachers from stealing chalk from one another," commenting on the dollars in the classroom. My question is simple: Do you believe the fundamental theme that every student deserves or should be entitled to an equal amount of funding, of course suggested for your geography, their language, their culture, whatever the magic Superman formula that you mentioned?

Dr Thornburg: That wasn't mine.

Mr O'Toole: Somebody else used that phrase.

Mr Wildman: That was the teachers.

Mr O'Toole: It was the teachers, yes, the OSSTF people. Do you think, fundamentally, if we can get down to the basics, that every student deserves an equal amount of limited resources? We don't have everything. I wish I did —

Dr Thornburg: Yes, I understand there's a limited pot, but to make it absolutely equal when students are not absolutely equal, I would have to say no.

Mr O'Toole: Adjusted for those differences.

Dr Thornburg: Okay, if you say adjusted for all the differences, then the debate focuses on the nature of the differences and the size of the adjustments.

Mr O'Toole: I'm not sure, is that a yes?

Dr Thornburg: I don't think I can say yes or no to that question.

Mr O'Toole: That's why the bill's like that. Some of it isn't as easily defined, as you've just explained.

Dr Thornburg: The funding formula is still going to have to be derived.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr Thornburg, for your presentation and the eloquence with which you delivered it.

Mrs McLeod: Dr Thornburg drew my attention to something that I had overlooked in the previous presentation by Mr MacLeod, when he indicated that he was currently chair of the Sudbury board local education improvement committee. I don't know whether that is a coincidence of names or whether this is indeed seen by the Sudbury board to be one of the local education improvement committees to be established if this legislation becomes law. If so, I would think it is highly premature. I'd like some clarity as to whether this is a presumption on the part of the Sudbury board or whether there is yet another backroom process going on, even as we have hearings on this legislation, that would establish these committees.

Mr Skarica: It must be very backroom, if you want me to answer it, because I know of no such process.

Mrs McLeod: Can we determine, then, what local education improvement committee exists in the Sudbury area that Mr MacLeod chairs?

Mr Skarica: Is he still here?

The Chair: Perhaps we can find that out for you, Mrs McLeod, and report back.

1630

CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES LOCAL 895

The Chair: CUPE Local 895, public school support services, Bob Cullens. President Cullens, welcome. We're delighted to have you here.

Mr Bob Cullens: Hopefully, time will permit that I can finish the whole presentation as well. Without any further ado, then, we'll start right in.

I'm a member of the executive board of CUPE Local 895 and I'm here speaking on behalf of the 235 caretaking and maintenance employees there who are affected by the outsourcing clauses.

Mr Bisson: How many did you say?

Mr Cullens: Two hundred thirty five. For the past year, the government at Queen's Park has accused unions of unfairly treating students as pawns in an attempt to save our own jobs. The interesting part of this government reaction to union mobilization is the reference to playing chess. Chess is a game in which one must be extremely skilled to survive. It's the same game in which the one who controls the board controls the game. Governments and school boards have used the students as pawns since the very creation of the school system. They were used to generate public sympathy or outrage whenever it was convenient for them to institute change. Now the government is crying foul because someone else has decided that they are also willing and capable of playing chess.

In July 1995, the Minister of Education, Mr John Snobelen, publicly stated his intention to invent a crisis in Ontario's education system. This crisis would justify the radical and sweeping reforms that the government of Ontario wanted to make.

Since the minister's announcement, our public school system has come under a constant and seemingly never-ending barrage of criticism. The charges, all of which are disputable, are: education spending is out of control; too many education dollars are being spent outside the classroom; our students are graduating without a proper education; teachers are overpaid and have far too much control over education.

In support of their disputable charges, the government brought forward Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act. Once this bill is passed and becomes law retroactively, the government will begin to exert a new control over Ontario's education system, starting with the establishment of the undemocratic, unaccountable and appointed Education Improvement Commission.

Bill 104 is a giant leap down the road to the privatization of Ontario schools. First, non-instructional services will be outsourced. For those in this room who are not aware, "outsourced" is the politically correct buzzword de jour for contracted out, period. The next to go will most likely be the construction and maintenance of new schools to the private sector, and then charter schools, finally followed up with the privatization of curriculums and teaching, creating our own little Alabama of the north.

CUPE does not believe that our education system is broken; at least, it's not broken yet. It will be broken if the government gets its way. In fact, there is growing support for the speculation that the agenda of this government is to

break the system and then use the public dissatisfaction that is created to build support for the creation of a private system.

This presentation will focus on the issues in Bill 104 that most directly affect 35,000 CUPE members: 450 of them work right here in Sudbury as cleaners, custodians and maintenance workers with both the public and separate school boards. I am speaking, once again, directly on behalf of the 235 members of CUPE Local 895 with the Sudbury Board of Education.

Bill 104 is an attack on our community. Once established, the appointed Education Improvement Commission will be mandated to recommend to the government how to, not whether or not to, outsource all non-instructional services in the system. It definitely appears that the privatization of our 235 decent jobs is based on the government's contention that too much money is being spent outside the classroom on services such as caretaking and maintenance, not duplication and over-administration. It definitely sounds as if the government wants to return to the days of the one-room schoolhouse. That was when students walked all those miles in minus 40 degree weather to get to school and home again, like my father-in-law.

Mr Wildman: Uphill both ways.

Mr Cullens: Yes, uphill both ways, carrying coal.

The teacher swept the classroom and lit the wood stove in the winter. Nice neighbours would stop by and shovel the snow, repair the roof or windows and do any odd jobs like painting. The full day would be spent concentrating on learning because students would not have to be bothered by those overpaid school psychologists, speech therapists, guidance counsellors or special education assistants. Of course, there would be no photocopiers, phones or faxes, so we won't need the school secretary either. In those good old days the system was run very cheaply.

One question that the government is not asking the public is, are the services available in today's system worth the extra costs? They don't ask because they are afraid that they would receive a resounding yes and that is not what they want to hear.

We have a world-class education system here in Ontario. It is world-class because it is public and has developed good processes of both governance and accountability. If the government is not suggesting that we do without these important services in our schools, then what it must be saying is that employees should do these jobs for lower wages and worse working conditions. This is an unacceptable job strategy by anyone's standards. The average CUPE member supports a family on less than \$24,000 per year. CUPE members definitely don't need to be convinced that our education system and our jobs are worth defending.

Bill 104, an attack on services. What about the quality of non-instructional services? Does it matter if private companies clean the schools, maintain and repair the plumbing and the furnace, handle student reports and staff the board office and schools for profit? In CUPE's experience it most certainly does. Our students deserve the best possible environment in which to learn. In fact, studies have shown that students do much better academically in clean, safe and comfortable environments. They deserve well-trained and well-treated staff in their schools.

CUPE's experience with privatization in education, as well as in the health care and municipal sectors, shows that

services invariably suffer. Buildings are not as clean. Lower-paid and insecure staff tend to have a higher turnover rate. Sometimes contractors go out of business, leaving the public to pick up the bill. Time and time again we have seen that privatization is done only for ideological reasons, not because it provides better service and not because it costs less.

Bill 104, an attack on communities. When the Harris government attacks jobs, it also attacks communities. Yes, there will be private-sector jobs in schools if private companies take over non-instructional services. Unfortunately, the need to make a profit will dictate that there will be even fewer jobs than there are in an already cut-to-the-bone workplace. These private-sector jobs will pay less and they will not provide the benefits and fair working conditions that inspire loyalty and consistency in staff.

In taking money out of the pockets of workers, you also take money out of our local economy. Consumer confidence is already low, with people hanging on to their hard-earned dollars. If Bill 104 is passed, landlords will find usually reliable tenants not able to pay their rent. Banks will have former school board employees defaulting on their mortgages. Local retailers will see business fall off.

Such an economic strategy is simply unacceptable, especially in a province where the real unemployment rate stands at 14.2%. That was in November 1996, and that includes, by the way, the people who have given up looking for jobs because they just won't be available.

Privatization of our public school system will only take money out of Ontario's economy. Currently, large American-based companies, such as ServiceMaster, are best positioned to profit from the sudden and massive privatization of non-instructional services in Ontario schools. Entering into contracts with these companies will siphon our tax dollars out of this city, region, the province and even this country.

Bill 104, the attack on democratic institutions. The North American free trade agreement and current negotiations on the agreement on internal trade also present serious considerations that must be taken into account. Provisions in NAFTA make it virtually impossible for services that have been privatized to be returned to the public sector, whether or not privatization worked out. Once the AIT is expanded to include local government, there is reason to believe that these provisions will also apply to school boards. If total privatization of non-instructional services were not to work out, boards could only take this work back in-house if companies involved were financially compensated for all lost business now and in the future. Obviously the price of returning the work to the public sector would be cost-prohibitive.

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CUPE members are very concerned about the establishment of the Education Improvement Commission. It seems that the government is unwilling to take full responsibility for the changes it is about to unleash on our schools. Instead, an unelected and unaccountable body will take over what should be the responsibility of elected politicians at both the provincial and local levels.

Our conclusion and recommendations: Number one is that clean and safe schools are not a luxury.

The next piece is an excerpt from *Our School, Ourselves*, 1988, and it reads:

"Boards are starting to recognize that caretakers are not simply engaged in cleaning buildings; they are an integral part of the school community. They keep an eye out for vandals, deal with numerous problems brought to them by teachers and students and generally provide a stable and supportive presence in the schools. The high labour turnover associated with contracting out undercuts this important social role."

For-profit contractors do not have the same commitment or dedication to students, staff and facilities. They are there to clean and get paid. They are not there to look for safety violations or contraventions. In far too many instances, the work performed by these contractors is not up to standards, ours or yours. Far too often we have to go behind them and correct deficiencies.

Will Bill 104 "improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system" as it promises? No, Bill 104 is designed to start the process of privatizing large portions of our education system while giving the government the full control it needs to continue on that path, whether through charter school legislation or the sale of schools to the private sector, and the list goes on and on.

CUPE members are not prepared to sit idly by while their jobs are eliminated. We will fight to maintain the high quality of services that we provide and defend the well-being of the communities we live in.

Recommendations:

(1) To reinform — reaffirm; reinform would be good too — the need for the public delivery of education, acknowledging that a public system is more efficient and more equitable.

(2) Defeat Bill 104 and engage in true consultation with all partners in education. We take away the word "stakeholders" because I keep thinking of vampires, and we're not after them yet.

(3) If meaningful consultation with all partners in education still results in school board amalgamations, establish a process that protects jobs. Put fair workplace adjustment programs in place and protect the public delivery of all aspects of the education system.

(4) Return accountability to the hands of elected representatives, being the MPPs and trustees, not the unelected and unaccountable Education Improvement Commission and the local education improvement committees.

(5) Ensure that the boards of education are stronger and not weaker, and that they're more accountable, not less accountable.

(6) Finally, invest more, not less, in our public education system.

Summing up, who are the non-instructional workers in the education system? That's with the Sudbury Board of Education etc. CUPE members work in all occupations in the education sector. Across Ontario our members are education assistants, custodians, cleaners, tradespeople, clerical workers, audio-visual technicians, English-as-a-second-language instructors, speech pathologists, counselors, school bus drivers, accounting personnel, computer programmers, technicians, gardeners, librarians, purchasing agents, and the list goes on, in support of our education system. Here in Sudbury, CUPE represents cleaners, custodians, maintenance and tradespersons.

All of these occupations are an important part of the quality of the education delivered in the classroom. Yet

school board workers tend to receive a very modest rate of pay for the important work we do. Many of our members are only paid 10 months of the year.

We are the most visible members of the in-school team. We are the first to arrive in the morning and the last to leave at night. We keep the schools clean and safe. We check the boilers to make sure they are operating properly and safely. We damp-mop, scrub, wash, spray, buff, polish floors and change burned-out lights. We shovel snow and sand to keep the outside area safe, which this year may be year-round. We ensure a safe and clean learning environment. These jobs we do because we care about the health and safety of the students and staff and because it is our role as members of the school team.

We have the little extras that we do as well, because we care about the students, such as: retrieve balls and kites off of school roofs, repair broken eyeglasses, inflate bicycle tires, fix broken coat zippers, volunteer extra hours, coach sports teams, work extra hours for after-school functions, and security, to name a few. We could name these for hours.

Our schools have a family atmosphere that we're very proud of and are not going to give up easily. The students know us and are comfortable with us. They know that they can come to us when they are hurt or in need of help. This relationship would be lost with the strangers that private contractors' turnover rates would provide. The students would lose again. Boards of education will have no control over who the private contractor hires or fires, and therefore will have no control over who works in our schools; in your schools. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Cullens, for coming here today and for presenting the recommendations and positions of your organization. You've exhausted all the time you had.

Mr Cullens: Right on cue.

The Chair: Right on cue. You were perfect.

Mr Skarica: In response to Mrs McLeod's inquiry, Mr MacLeod is still here and he indicated to me that, after the meeting with Mr Cooke and Ms Vanstone, the Sudbury board decided to set up an education improvement committee in anticipation of the legislation. There's no deal or legal authority or anything to bind the government. The board decided to initiate a process to get a jump on the legislation.

The Chair: Thank you.

HORNEPAYNE BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: Could I call on the Hornepayne Board of Education. Ms Beatty, welcome. We're happy to have you here to present the views of your organization.

Ms Janice Beatty: Thank you very much. I represent two groups this afternoon. I represent the Hornepayne Board of Education and I also represent our proposed district partners, namely, the Hearst, Kapuskasing-Smooth Rock Falls, Cochrane, Iroquois Falls, Black River, Matheson, Timmins, Kirkland Lake and Timiskaming boards of education.

As a group, we represent a very large and diverse section of the province. However, we share similar concerns about Bill 104. One of our main concerns is the geographic

distance involved: It is over 700 kilometres from one end to the other of our board. It's an eight-hour drive in good weather and with ideal road conditions.

Mr Wildman: How long did it take you today?

Ms Beatty: It took me nine hours' driving to get here and the roads were bare.

That means that no matter where the central office is, even if we locate it in the geographic centre of our board, it will still be a four-hour drive to the centre. This is a distance that is going to be involved in providing education and service to children at the extreme edges. We encompass, I believe, four provincial ridings in our board.

We believe that because of the size the local accountability will be drastically decreased. Currently, most communities in that very large area have representation. With Bill 104, most small communities will not have any representation on the board. In fact, our own small community will very likely have none. The proposed scarcity factors will not sufficiently address the issue. There just will not be enough places on that board for all those children to be represented.

To whom will local parents address concerns or complaints when the representatives are that many hours away? For example, if there was such a thing as a suspension hearing — these are often held by boards — as the parent, would I be required to drive six or seven hours to attend a district board suspension hearing to plead my child's case?

School councils are advisory, and while they are a great adjunct to our school system, sometimes action rather than advice is required.

How will our small schools and specialized programs so vital to the local communities — and I'm talking very tiny, local communities which are isolated — survive? Small schools traditionally have higher per pupil costs. I know our own high school has probably the highest per pupil cost in the province of Ontario. Who is going to fight for that school on a large district board when budget cuts are to be decided if we don't even have a representative from our community? At what point is our school, because of its high per pupil costs, going to attract attention for budget-cutting purposes, and who will speak for our children at that level?

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Technology may resolve some problems associated with distance but it cannot resolve them all. You may be interested to know that some of our trustees attended a meeting in Timmins last weekend and did a trial with videoconferencing. I understand it was a disaster. Additionally, we do not have cell phone service in Hornepayne. Modem lines are often unreliable. I've been on line with OISE and a number of other institutions and often in the winter you just cannot get through. You get on to the line and it cuts you off. We do not have digital technology.

Are children in the north to become second-class citizens in Ontario simply by virtue of where they live? We are particularly concerned in Hornepayne. To give you a sense of where Hornepayne is, as I told you, we drove nine hours to get here. It's a very small, isolated railway community. We have about 1,400 people. We have one grocery store, one northern store, and the nearest surgical hospital is in Hearst, 140 kilometres away, which is a two-hour drive in winter over secondary highways. Secondary highways are

not plowed to bare. They remain snow-packed and they are not a priority. That means if our kids are ever considered for busing in a large board, they would be travelling two hours over secondary, snow-packed highways in sub-40-degree temperatures. The alternative would be to board and lodge them. I don't know how many of you would be willing to let your 13-year-old go away to school.

What will happen to our schools? How will they survive viability standards of a district board and who will vote to protect them? Hornepayne is currently, I believe, the smallest complete board in the province. We have one school. It's an SK-to-OAC school, with 225 students. The speaker before me described the small schools of the past where the neighbours would stop by and shovel the snow and help out with things at the school. That's very much what our Hornepayne school is like. As I say, we're a very small community and everyone pitches in. Our trustees have gone on the roof to shovel snow. Our high school has 85 students. How many high schools do you know with 85 students? Think about it. How viable will our high school be in the context of a district board?

We also have separate secondary students attending at our high school. Our separate ratepayers have two representatives on our public board for secondary purposes. The local RCSS board has identical boundaries and an elementary school of approximately the same size as ours. We offer the only secondary education in the community. The local RCSS board is going to be an education authority. They are currently an isolate board. We believe the same should occur with our board. It makes no sense for two boards in the same community, sharing a high school, sharing trustees, sharing boundaries, to be treated differently.

Look at a map. I don't know if you have one here, but if you look, Hornepayne does not fit easily or well with any jurisdiction. We are centrally located between Highways 17 and 11. We are a six-hour drive from Thunder Bay. We are a five-hour drive from Sault Ste Marie. We are a nine-hour drive from Sudbury. No matter where you put us, we're going to be at the end of the line. Because of our size and isolation, that doesn't make us attractive to anyone. We will not be a partner; we will be a poor cousin and our kids will suffer. It will be very hard to serve those isolated children because of the distance and the natural barrier that is created by the weather in the north.

The purpose of Bill 104 is to improve the quality of education. That's one of the headings at the beginning of the bill, if you read it. We don't believe it's going to improve education for Hornepayne.

We are certainly at a crossroads in education in Ontario, but the application of these changes must make sense and they must make sense on an individual basis. Students must be protected if you're going to improve education. What you are planning to do in Hornepayne will not protect students or improve education. These children are going to become isolated, poor cousins at the end of the line, receiving the last of anyone's attention.

The application of standardized rules has resulted in a strange dichotomy in Hornepayne. Our students are entitled to education within our own community. This is not about job preservation or trustee preservation. It's about ensuring that a community has public education that is locally based.

The province has assured that for our separate elementary students. Are not the public students entitled to the same thing? The creation of a public education authority not only makes sense, it can be easily done. There are only two or three areas in the province where there are coterminous isolate and non-isolate boards. Hornepayne is one of them. Such a move would not open the floodgates, but it would make a lot of sense. We urge that you consider this for the children of Hornepayne. Don't let them get lost in the shuffle.

If this bill is to go forward, it has to be applied in a way that is sensitive to the communities and the children. Please ensure that it does. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We were intrigued by finding Hornepayne on the map.

Ms Beatty: Did you find us?

Mr Wildman: Hornepayne is not hard to find. It's halfway between Winnipeg and Toronto.

The Chair: Winnipeg and Toronto aren't shown on this side of the map. That was the problem. Thank you very much. You've been very clear and cogent in your presentation. You've exhausted all of your time but you've made your case.

Mr Wildman: Madam Chair, I'd like to make a motion.

The Chair: May I please first, Mr Wildman, call upon the School Advisory Board for Holy Angels School, Henry Rowlinson. Is he here? Perhaps we'll move to the Sault Ste Marie Board of Education. I know Ms Pat Mick is here. Mr Wildman.

Mr Wildman: I move that the standing committee on social development express the view that the Hornepayne Board of Education should become designated a school authority under Bill 104.

The Chair: Do you wish to speak to that motion, Mr Wildman?

Mr Wildman: I think Ms Beatty has made the point very clearly. The coterminous board will be —

Mrs McLeod: Excuse me, Madam Chair, I have a point of order: There's a motion before the committee. A number of people who are obviously concerned about the motion are talking to the last deputant. I wonder if we should hold the motion until all members could be present.

Mr Wildman: I'd be happy to do that. I'll just write it out then.

The Chair: We'll defer that.

Mrs McLeod: I raise a question again for the parliamentary assistant. It arises from the opportunity of looking at Hornepayne in relationship to that bizarre district board number 1 which includes virtually all of the boards that are north of Sudbury. If I go back to the Sweeney map, I'm not going to dwell on that in terms of the fact that it would have had three boards where that district 1 is, I notice that there is an area that is completely left off the government maps that does, I believe, have a board of its own, or at least was to have a board of its own under Sweeney. It doesn't appear in anything we have from the government, and I would like to ask what has happened to Moose Factory, James Bay lowlands and Moosonee?

Mr Skarica: Obviously it's not on the map. I'll have to inquire why it isn't on the map.

Interjection: It is.

Mr Skarica: It is on the map?

Mr Bisson: I would like to point out that the James Bay lowland is part of Ontario and I wish it would have been included in this particular —

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs McLeod: It's on the map of Ontario, it's not on the map of —

The Chair: The question has been raised and Mr Skarica will provide an answer.

1700

SAULT STE MARIE BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: Ms Mick, thank you so much. You've come a long way to be here this evening and we're happy that we're able to have you a little earlier so you don't have to drive home quite so late.

Ms Pat Mick: I'm happy too because I'm actually driving to Kitchener tonight.

The Chair: My gracious, that's even farther.

Ms Mick: Better highways, though.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a presentation on behalf of the Sault Ste Marie Board of Education. We realize that we are fortunate, as many others were not able to have this opportunity. I've attached the brief from the Central Algoma, North Shore, Michipicoten and Chapleau boards on the back of mine, as they were unable to come. Many trustees from northern boards are unable to afford the time and costs entailed in driving several hours to Sudbury.

The trustees from Sault Ste Marie are like most trustees in that we are, above all, advocates for children and their education in our role as representatives for local taxpayers. We are democratically and locally elected citizens who care very much about the education of the students in our community and who wish to concentrate our energies on making any necessary changes to equip all students educationally for our rapidly changing world.

The Sault Ste Marie Board of Education has always been open to thoughtful change that has been well planned, and above all, of benefit to our learners. Previous governments implemented change by holding extensive hearings to seek input from educators and trustees. Studies and pilot projects were run to test effectiveness. This government is planning massive changes at lightning speeds without meaningful consultation, thoughtful study or consideration of the results of these changes. As elected local representatives, we feel compelled to respond to the way in which this government is proposing change.

We have yet to see a study that proves cuts and cutbacks improve student achievement. In particular, the elimination of local school boards greatly concerns us and here are the reasons:

The system could become inaccessible and non-responsive to the concerns of students, parents and all other citizens; as locally elected trustees, we face and consult with our electorate daily on the street, in the schools, in the shops and at community activities; every time we make a decision we know that we are directly accountable to our fellow citizens; at present, if a citizen wishes to contact us, all it takes is a local telephone call; with increased reliance on school advisory councils and the reduction in the numbers of trustees, the majority of taxpayers, who do not have children in school, will have minimal or no access to local representation.

In summary, after 150 years, the citizens of Ontario will lose local accessibility for addressing education concerns.

Another grave concern we have is the size of our proposed new board with its geographical characteristics. Our proposed new board would include most of the Algoma district, without Hornepayne, by the way, but we have the area of Chapleau.

We are concerned because the size of this area is as large as Great Britain, but without the same efficient transport system or moderate climate of that country. The boundaries of the district in relation to Sault Ste Marie are: White River is 330 kilometres northwest; Spanish is 186 kilometres east; Chapleau is 368 kilometres or 309 more dangerous kilometres north, depending on which road is more passable.

Road travel in the north is often treacherous and many times impossible. In 1995 there were 21 road closures because of poor weather conditions, in 1996 there were 32 closures, and in 1997, from January 5 to January 22 alone, there were 13 closures. These are figures from the MTO and they are our area alone.

The distances in another perspective: To travel from one end of the board to the other would be equivalent to travelling from Toronto to Montreal. To travel from the northern border of Michigan down to the Illinois border is faster than to travel from White River to Spanish, and that's over four-lane highways.

We are concerned about the costs to administer this huge jurisdiction. Transportation, meals and accommodation for staff and trustees to travel will be very costly. Telecommunications will be far more costly. Telephone conversations throughout most of the district involve long-distance charges. Citizens may face the expense of long-distance charges whenever they wish to contact a trustee or administrator. Teleconferencing and other technological infrastructure is either inadequate or non-existent. We understand that Bell Canada would equip northern boards in two years if the government is willing to fund the technology. In addition, the Education Act must be amended to allow electronic technology to be used for meetings.

We are concerned because the five boards presently existing in the proposed new district are very unique entities. One is a remote lumber community. One has a large retirement community, several small towns and a rural area. One is a remote mining and manufacturing community. One is mainly rural, composed of 15 unique communities. Sault Ste Marie, with about 60% of the students of the proposed board, is a combination of city, rural, and small communities.

By amalgamating these boards which are represented by over 25 municipal governments, many citizens and whole communities and several native reserves will be virtually — they don't vote but we do represent them — disfranchised on educational issues.

We are not disputing downsizing to a reasonable extent, but we see this proposed board as too huge and unmanageable to be in the best interests of the education of our children. The onerous load for administration of this mega-board cannot possibly be cost-efficient and can only affect children adversely.

As trustees, we see our present role as uncomplicated — serving our students, ratepayers, employees and community

in the fairest way possible. With this proposal, we will still be municipal politicians but we'll be treated far differently from municipal councils. We would become one board with five to 12 trustees representing the same area covered by over 25 municipalities, each with a mayor or reeve and many councillors.

We anticipate this information will help you to more fully appreciate the concerns we have about the reduction in the number of northern boards, given the distances, geographical peculiarities and uniqueness of the individual communities, which all play a very important part in the effectiveness of local representation.

Regarding representation, we are concerned that:

The suggested five to 12 representation range will not be adequate to ensure that an elected representative is accessible, accountable and representative of the population served.

The size of the proposed board will make effective policy discussion and decision-making at the local level very difficult, if not impossible.

The costs for running for election in this larger jurisdiction will be prohibitive for many.

All northern trustees receive well below the \$10,498 provincial average honorarium and many collect little or nothing.

Trustees serve on many committees as well as attending regular board meetings. Many trustees work at full-time jobs in addition to their duties as a trustee. To add the difficulties and time commitments of travel may preclude the average citizen from taking part.

We are concerned that not enough recognition has been given to boards which have effectively found ways to share resources with their coterminous neighbours. We see this as a much more commonsense approach to save tax dollars. For example, given the challenges of geography and distance, many coterminous boards in the north are saving taxpayers thousands of dollars.

For example, in the North Shore board, Elliot Lake Secondary School houses public and separate board students with a French secondary program housed nearby, all under one umbrella. In Blind River, Chapleau and Wawa, English and French public and separate board students are housed in the same school. Michipicoten and Chapleau do not have a director of education but share a superintendent of schools for both Michipicoten public and separate boards and the Chapleau public board. They also share a business administrator.

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These small boards are very worried that their cooperative, economical systems will cease if they are amalgamated into one large public and one large separate board, costing the taxpayer much more money.

We would like to follow their examples to have more pressure applied to force cooperation with our coterminous board in Sault Ste Marie. We feel this would save many more tax dollars than the current proposal for amalgamation.

We see Bill 104 as actually increasing bureaucracy and costs by establishing a central Education Improvement Commission, a multitude of local EICs, and for the first time entrenching in legislation four types of boards for Ontario: English-language public and Catholic boards and French-language public and Catholic boards.

The mandate of the task force on school reduction was to reduce boards by 40% to 50%. In their report they said they tried to ensure "reasonable distances between a board and the communities whose schools it administers." They also said, "We acknowledge that new technology and school councils will not resolve all the problems of boards that cover a large geographical area."

Given the information we have just presented to you, we ask that you take these two statements seriously in your deliberations regarding northern boards.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much, Ms Mick, for coming to make a presentation here in Sudbury. You mention at the very end, on page 4, after making a very good case about the area involved and the diversity, that the task force on school board reduction, that is, the Sweeney task force, made a very different recommendation.

Ms Mick: Yes.

Mr Wildman: Is it fair for me to ask you, can you tell us what Sweeney recommended with regard to the boards in Algoma district?

Ms Mick: With regard to Sault Ste Marie, they were left as one board, as at present. Central Algoma, I believe, was included with North Shore.

Mr Wildman: Espanola and Manitoulin.

Ms Mick: Espanola, North Shore, Chapeau and Michipicoten, and they are sharing schools; they're sharing just about everything right now and it made a lot more sense.

Mr Wildman: Instead of one board. They were talking about amalgamations but they were talking about amalgamations that would end up with three boards.

Ms Mick: Yes.

Mr Skarica: We heard yesterday from many of the northern boards that they are setting up a situation where they're sharing a lot of services and basically amalgamating a lot of administrative services, but not in fact amalgamating the entire boards. How feasible is that in your situation here?

Ms Mick: We've been meeting for several years with our local — you're talking coterminous boards now?

Mr Skarica: Yes.

Ms Mick: We've been meeting with our coterminous board for several years and we've been really trying to share. We share a couple of bus routes and that's about it. But because of the convoluted grant system for their transportation, they wind up with a much more generous grant system than we do and they feel they're in competition. They can pick up their JKs at the door, whereas we can't, and they don't want to make their children walk to meet our policy because they're afraid of losing students. That's what a lot of it is out there; it's that fear.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciated the clarification of the differences between this proposal and the one that had come from Sweeney. How do you see your role as a trustee under this new amalgamated board, given the distances that you would have to travel to board meetings, and as well given the fact that the companion piece is to take over 100% of the funding so that essentially you won't have a lot of control over the funding in your area as well?

Ms Mick: No, we're told our role would be policy. I guess we'd sit at meetings and be into a lot of the drier stuff. We wouldn't have this face-to-face contact. A lot of

people say trustees don't belong in schools. I know our local schools love to see us, the children love to see that we are interested. As far as the distances go, it does preclude a lot of trustees from taking part. It'll be, as someone said, the rich and the famous. I don't think the famous; it would be the rich or the retired who would be able to be a trustee.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Mick. We appreciate your time.

We were scheduled to hear from the school advisory board for Holy Angels School at 5:20, Mr Henry Rowlinson. Has Mr Rowlinson come in?

Mr Wildman: Could I ask a question of the parliamentary assistant and then raise a matter with regard to the motion I put?

The Vice-Chair: Yes, certainly.

Mr Wildman: Just in regard to the last presentation made by the Sault Ste Marie Board of Education, if, and I underline the word "if," the government is prepared to consider the presentations that were made to us in Ottawa with regard to the Lanark, Leeds-Grenville, Prescott-Russell and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry amalgamation, where the suggestion was made we should follow the proposal of Sweeney to have two boards rather than one, would the government also take that same approach in terms of areas like Algoma district?

Mr Skarica: Sorry, I didn't get the last part.

Mr Wildman: Would you take the same approach in considering amalgamations of boards in areas like Algoma district?

Mr Skarica: I can tell you when I approach the minister I'm going to go over the submissions we heard here, and I think each board is on a board-by-board basis. The considerations in northwestern Ontario, quite frankly, are somewhat different than northeastern Ontario, because my impression of northwestern Ontario was that it didn't have the infrastructure for teleconferencing and so on and so forth, as we saw in northeastern Ontario.

Mr Wildman: I appreciate the answer from Mr Skarica. I would just point out that in my view fair is fair and if you're going to treat eastern Ontario one way, you're going to treat northeastern Ontario and northwestern Ontario the same.

Mrs McLeod: I must then ask for some clarification from the parliamentary assistant. You may have heard from the Sudbury board that there was some infrastructure. It would not extend to Espanola. He certainly heard from all the northern area boards in that vast area of northeastern Ontario that there is not the infrastructure, whether it is technological or transportation.

Mr Skarica: I was talking about that horseshoe board around Ottawa. It has more infrastructure than what exists —

Mrs McLeod: Right. So then your answer to Mr Wildman is that both in northwestern Ontario and northeastern Ontario you'll take back the considerations you've heard?

Mr Skarica: Yes.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate that. Thank you.

The Chair: While we have a moment, Mr Wildman, perhaps we could return to your motion.

Mr Wildman: I appreciate the indulgence of the committee. I'll just read the motion first:

I move that the standing committee on social development express the view that the Ministry of Education and Training should designate the Hornepayne Board of Education as a school authority, as the ministry has stated it intends to designate the coterminous isolate Hornepayne Roman Catholic Separate School Board, and that the Hornepayne Board of Education should not be amalgamated with the other boards to form the proposed district school board 1.

The Chair: Debate on the motion?

Mr Wildman: There are other presenters here. I don't need to hold it up, but Ms Beatty made the case very well. Hornepayne is a very isolated community, as I said, halfway between Winnipeg and Toronto on the CN line. It is not close to anywhere else in any of the other proposed amalgamated boards. Its coterminous board is going to be one of the school authorities as proposed under Bill 104. It has exactly the same boundaries as the Hornepayne Board of Education. It serves a similar population and a similar number of students. It serves the same community. It makes sense that the Hornepayne Board of Education and its students and ratepayers be treated the same way as the coterminous board.

Mrs McLeod: I'm not sure if there's been an opportunity to get an answer to the question I raised on the status of the James Bay —

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The Chair: We're dealing with the motion.

Mrs McLeod: It is directly relevant to the motion. I think it's in a comparable situation and I'm not sure of the status. If I could get the answer to that now, I think there's a very definite relationship between that area and the Hornepayne area.

Mr Skarica: I was going to propose for the time being, until we get clarification of Mrs McLeod's point, to amend your motion to read — as I was impressed with the Hornepayne submission as well — as follows: "I move that the standing committee on social development express the view that the Education Improvement Commission investigate the feasibility of designating," and then just go on, and then it's in accord with the rest of the act. The act, as it presently stands, doesn't deal specifically with any borders.

Mr Wildman: If I could respond, I appreciate the effort of Mr Skarica to respond in a positive way, but I would say that if the committee expresses the view that the ministry should do this, that then gives direction to the Education Improvement Commission; that is, if the ministry agrees with the committee. There's nothing binding by this motion on the ministry, but whatever happens to this motion, I know that the people of Hornepayne will be putting pressure on the Education Improvement Commission to do exactly this. I would just like to avoid them having to go through that process.

The Chair: Mrs McLeod had the floor when Mr Wildman was responding.

Mrs McLeod: That's fine, and I guess I partly direct my comment to Mr Wildman as well in terms of whether there would be any benefit in holding the motion until we could find out the status of the James Bay-Mooseonee-Moose Factory area. I think it's relevant because it simply doesn't appear on any of the government's proposed reorganization. That says one of three things to me, and I don't know

the current status: It is a board now and is going to be made a school authority; or it's a school authority now and is going to remain a school authority; or it's just been forgotten about. In any case, if that area is a school authority, I think the precedent is there to look at Hornepayne in exactly the same way. I just think the two cases are so comparable, given their particular geographic location.

Interjection.

The Chair: Mr Skarica does not think he'll have an answer for that today.

Mr Wildman: Also, I think the information Mrs McLeod is asking for is important, but I don't think it's crucial to this motion. The crucial matter is that it has been indicated that the coterminous board, serving exactly the same community, is going to be designated as a school authority if Bill 104 passes. If the coterminous board is going to be, then so should the public board.

Mr O'Toole: I would like to just go on the record expressing my view individually without consulting with my other government members here that clearly this is an exception, that clearly it's an exception we all want to recognize. I think it's rather hasty, without full review, to set any sort of precedent and direction without taking it back and looking at all alternatives.

When I asked the presenter — I was impressed with her sincerity and knowledge — it was clear that there was some other information at large here that predetermined the decision to take the decision of creating an authority for the separate board. This has to do with the number of students and who runs the high schools. There are a whole bunch of things here. Perhaps it is unique and perhaps it could be a confederated situation of some sort. I don't think it falls into this formula at all, personally. I'm not supportive of the motion as it's written.

Mr Beaubien: Just a quick comment. I agree with Mr Wildman's intention here, but basically I don't think it's fair. I cannot support it at this point in time, even though I agree with it, because I just don't have enough background information. To have one person coming in front of the committee, make a presentation, I don't have any other background information and I don't think it's fair to try to put us in a situation that we might regret down the road. I need more information before I can vote on it.

Interjection: I think the parliamentary assistant had the answer.

Mr Duncan: When you pass this bill it doesn't matter anyway, because the EIC has total power. I think we should say, as an expression of support to this community and to the boards, "Listen, EIC" — they've put a very compelling case to us. Frankly, passing this resolution, they're not bound by it in any event. I think it's simply a matter of expression at this time which I personally can support because the case is compelling. Whatever other details may have been omitted or not discussed here, certainly the EIC can take that into consideration.

Mr Bisson: I just want to add to the argument, without rehashing everything, that we are the MPPs; it's our responsibility to bring forward in the debate of legislation amendments that complement the bill or try to strengthen it. Clearly what we've got here is that everybody agrees there is a problem. If we have an opportunity to address it, I think we should.

As was mentioned earlier, in the end the Minister of Education will do what the Minister of Education does, but if we as a committee want to make a recommendation, there's nothing that prevents us from doing that. I don't think we should just say, "We're not going to take our responsibilities," and throw it on to the Education Improvement Commission. The buck stops with us and we have to start the process.

Mr Arnott: I thought the Hornepayne presentation was very compelling as well, but like Mr Beaubien I'm not sure I fully understand the ramifications of Mr Wildman's motion. It might be helpful for him not to push for a vote on this motion. Perhaps we could defer it until tomorrow so that we'll have had more opportunity to reflect, and perhaps ideally to have some sort of presentation from ministry staff as to what the full ramifications are. That would be my suggestion.

Mr Wildman: Madam Chair, in light of the comments made by members, I don't want to have this motion defeated. I'll be very blunt. If deferring until tomorrow means it is possible that we will get the chance to pass the motion, since most members have said they are sympathetic to it, I'll be happy to stand it down. I will say this, and I'll be very frank: If in the intervening hours the ministry staff scurry around to try and persuade government members to vote against this motion, I will be very disappointed.

Mr Skarica: I think we're too independent-minded for you to worry about that.

Interjections.

The Chair: Seeing some unusual consensus, we'll stand the motion down until tomorrow.

Is the school advisory board for Holy Angels school here yet? No? All right, then.

CITIZENS FOR THE PRESERVATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Chair: Citizens for the Preservation of Public Education, Phil Smith. Welcome again, Mr Smith. You're here in another guise, but we're pleased to have you here.

Mr Bisson: I'm just going to take one minute, no longer, because I want to leave the time for Phil to be able to present. I want members to understand clearly what the process has been here. There has been very little time for a lot of people to try to understand what Bill 104 is about and to get our heads around it so we can move forward with the implementation of the amendments as need be.

The school boards, the trustees, students and everyone involved in the education community in the riding of Cochrane South put together a committee, and this committee held its own public hearings in the communities of Cochrane South. This is a citizens' committee that went out, heard from everybody from trustees to parents, to teachers, to you name it, and this presentation is a culmination of what was heard at those particular hearings.

I just want to add, and I don't do this to be combative, that I wish the committee had travelled to the areas of Cochrane South or Cochrane North or even Timiskaming because it is going to be the largest school board in Ontario. Issues such as Hornepayne that have been raised here I think could have been clearly spoken to by the

people in our area. I only regret that it didn't come, so we organized our own hearings, and this is what you're going to hear.

The Chair: We're doubly interested in what you have to say, Mr Smith.

Mr Phil Smith: As has already been said, the size of the Cochrane district is daunting, the smallest being 700 kilometres from end to end, and this is not counting the detours off Highway 11 to places like Timmins.

Pat Toffolo, the Chair of Cochrane Iroquois Falls/Black River-Matheson Board of Education, issued a personal invitation to the EIC to visit the proposed district 1. This combines seven English boards and requires eight to nine hours of travel from one end to the other. Trustees, parents and students all expressed the fear of losing the contact which now exists between community and board. With the limited numbers of trustees, many of our smaller communities will be without representation. Many of these same communities would not be able to participate through teleconferencing either because of lack of phone service entirely — Wagoshi has one radio phone — or have party line services — Val Gagné and parts of Matheson.

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One trustee stated that she would not like to make a decision on a school in another town without having at least visited that site. That will mean much time on the road, and many people now serving as trustees would not be able to spend much time away from home and away from family responsibilities.

One parent worried about access to the board and keeping up with developments. She has two children with special needs and is working closely with her board to improve services. Trustees may be able to meet by teleconferencing, but how will parents attend such meetings?

Another parent is also a trustee. She made the decision to get involved to help improve our schools. As a parent with young children, she feels she and other parents will effectively be barred from the process now. With limited numbers of trustees and large school districts, the elections campaigns will be costly and time-consuming and potentially very political.

A student representing her school's student council suggested that if we must have these mega-boards, they should be only on paper. Only very top administration and perhaps departments like curriculum services should be centralized. Superintendents should have offices within the schools they actually serve.

French-language teachers and trustees all applaud the creation of separate French boards, but find the sizes of the school boards in our area a serious problem. It is recommended that school districts should involve no more than two and a half hours of travel from end to end.

Students, trustees, parents and teachers are appalled and frightened of the considerable powers given to this appointed body. They resent what appears to be the dictatorial nature of this commission and the fact that it can override duly elected boards before this bill is even passed into law.

One student pointed out that if taxpayers don't like what trustees are doing, they can choose to not re-elect them. If taxpayers don't want what the commission is doing, they have no recourse.

Parents from school councils did not feel that these councils should take on the responsibilities of governance, but they are concerned that the focus on the child will be lost in the process.

Everyone expressed confusion about what the role of the new school boards will actually be under the EIC. It appears they will be elected but have no power. Their present duties will be taken over by the EIC and the appointed commissioners will not be accountable to the school communities they govern.

Under part XIV of Bill 104, the EIC would apparently have the power to compel the outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards. Understandably, this is a real concern for the local OPIEU, CUPE and USWA members who presently work in secretarial and custodial positions, because it means their jobs will be gone.

However, it is interesting to note that this is a real concern for parents as well. Several parents expressed the fear that the contracting out of these jobs could mean a high turnover rate in personnel within individual schools. Parents rely very much on the personal care their children now receive within the schools and the trust that has developed. Other parents pointed out that their school secretaries and custodians knew their children and knew which child should go on which school bus and who has permission to pick them up at school.

Parents of children with special needs worry too. Since professional support staff are not considered part of classroom education, are these workers also on the chopping block?

Secondary school students like myself are concerned about the effect this bill will have on certain programs such as the arts and physical education. Many students presently require these programs, and some of these programs are favourites. They are afraid they will be lost in the shuffle of change. Will they have to find the money for private schools in the future if they want a first-class education? They expressed fear and a sense of isolation. Money rules and students don't count.

None of the presenters liked the idea of the shift of school taxes away from local sources. Although they conceded that centralized control could mean better services for some areas, they do not trust this government to bring all schools to the highest level. They do believe it will mean erosion of our public system as the total control of funds will be in provincial hands and subject to even more cuts. Trustees worry that present reserves generated from local taxes will not be spent locally but could be siphoned off to other areas.

Although one parent felt that principals and vice-principals should not be in the same bargaining unit as their teachers, all the presenters were convinced that these positions must be held by teachers. Some parents expressed the concern that removal of principals and vice-principals from teachers' federations will open the door for non-teachers to become school managers.

Teachers see their principals as educational leaders in the school, not as business managers. Although everyone agreed that rearrangement and sharing services are good ideas, they want to make sure this will also lead to a better education system, not just a cheaper one. They don't

understand this apparent haste and they want to be part of the change and they want to be consulted. Right now students, parents, staff and trustees feel shut out of a process they feel is undemocratic.

Without any indication by this government of what direction it wants to take with education, with no vision of the future, presenters expressed mistrust and fear of hidden agendas. More than one person expressed the concern that a crisis has been created in order to dismantle our public education system in favour of vouchers and charter schools. As one teacher pointed out, if we allow the destruction of public school system, the rules under NAFTA make it nearly impossible for us to retrieve it again.

In conclusion, I heard from the people of Timmins and Iroquois Falls that our schools are very much a part of our communities. They are more than a random collection of students, teachers, principals, staff and parents. They reflect the individual characters of our communities. Our schools are safe and nurturing places for all our children to learn and be part of their communities.

Our public schools are not and cannot become cost-efficient factories for uniformly programmed young people. All our children deserve the best education we can give them, and this requires a vibrant, flexible and receptive public school system. It also requires everyone's participation.

The Chair: Thank you very much for bringing that to us. It was very useful. We have a few minutes for questioning.

Mr Froese: Thank you for making a presentation. I've spoken to a lot of students your age, older and younger, about the education system and how things work and how things are structured. They told me they weren't necessarily concerned about what the structure was. They expressed some of the same concerns that were in the paper, that you expressed, that stuff like art or physical education and all that was being removed or whatever, some of those programs, because boards made decisions because of the reductions from the provincial government; let's face the fact. They had to reduce their spending or rearrange or reorganize their own organization, their own board. Students weren't concerned about what that structure was as long as they've got the education and the programs that were there that they needed for the future. I'd like to know your opinion on that.

Mr Phil Smith: My opinion on what's being cut?

Mr Froese: No, your opinion on the comments I've been receiving from students saying that they didn't really care how many boards there were, how many trustees there were; they wanted the funds in the classroom, they wanted the funds in programs where they could get their proper education for their future.

Mr Phil Smith: I think a lot of things shouldn't be cut, like secretaries and custodial workers, because they are part of the school. One of the secretaries came up to us in our committee meeting yesterday and said the secretaries become almost friends with the students.

Mr Froese: I'd like to know your opinion.

Mr Phil Smith: I think they shouldn't be cutting everything too. That's my personal view on it.

1740

Mr Bartolucci: Thank you very much for your excellent presentation. I'm very impressed with the process your

community underwent for you to get here today to give your community's views with regard to Bill 104. Just in review, you're concerned about losing that local autonomy. Second, you believe there's a role for everyone to play at the local level in education. Am I correct?

Mr Phil Smith: Yes.

Mr Bartolucci: Where then is the shortcoming with the EIC in all of this, the Education Improvement Commission, or, in this case, the education improvement committee.

Mr Phil Smith: I'm not —

Mr Bartolucci: Then let me maybe fill in a little bit. Do you find that with the creation of the Education Improvement Commission you're losing that local autonomy?

Mr Phil Smith: It almost seems like it. Yes, we are losing some stuff.

Mr Bartolucci: Very good. Thank you very much.

Mr Bisson: I've had the opportunity to listen to the presentations in Timmins. A number of students who came before the committee expressed views about what they saw as classroom education. There were some suggestions made that a number of services be removed from the school, such as arts, drama, library services and others. I just wonder if you can share with the committee what some of the students who presented before the committee commented about the loss of those possible services.

Mr Phil Smith: Some of the losses, especially with drama — a lot of people, like myself, would like to go into drama, get into theatre arts. They don't really like that. One girl came up to us yesterday and told us that with all of this she felt like she was an ant and that she had to follow everything that was going on. You've got this little ant and she's got to follow the queen ant; I guess the queen ant is the government and we all have to follow that, which she didn't agree with at all. There are a lot of little things like that too.

The Chair: I suggest to you that if the head of the government had indeed been a queen, it might have been different. In any event, Mr Smith —

Mr Jordan: That's out of order.

The Chair: I don't think the Chair can be ruled out of order, Mr Beaubien.

Mr Beaubien: I didn't make that comment.

The Chair: Oh, it was Mr Jordan. My apologies. I will correct the record.

Mr Smith, I want to thank you. I notice that you didn't have copies for us, but given the significance of your presentation —

Mr Phil Smith: We should have copies. There are copies.

The Chair: Terrific, because we would like to have that on the record. Thank you very much for being here.

I'm going to call again on the school advisory board for Holy Angels school. Is Henry Rowlinson here? I guess not. Is the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association here, or the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario?

SUDBURY REGIONAL COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS

The Chair: We'll move to the Sudbury Regional Council of Catholic Parent-Teacher Associations, Roberte Cunningham. Welcome, Ms Cunningham. We're delighted

to have you at this hour. Thank you for being here and for presenting to us.

Ms Roberte Cunningham: Thank you. I'm very happy to be here. My name is Roberte Cunningham. I am the past president of the Sudbury Regional Council of Catholic Parent-Teacher Associations. I'd like to address some of the issues and share with you questions that have arisen in relation to Bill 104.

Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, 1997, an act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system, amends the Education Act and changes how education is governed.

Equity: A recently proposed new funding model promises equity in educational dollars. There is a need in our separate schools for realistic equity so that programs and services may be maintained at a reasonable level. Will there be equal distribution of money?

District school boards: Bill 104, providing for the creation of the new district school boards, will result, in some areas of the province, in large geographical areas and a greater population base. The English section of the Sudbury District Roman Catholic Separate School Board will remain unchanged. Our student population is approximately 8,900. This is a small board in comparison to others. How will this affect our funding? Will additional funds be provided as deemed necessary for our board to adequately meet our students' needs? Will our board be able to continue with the programs presently offered? Will grants be adequate to ensure that the needs of our special education students are met? Our English district separate school board would no longer be coterminous with the English district public school board. Will this not present some difficulties with the coordination of sharing of services?

Outsourcing of services. Non-instructional services: What exactly comes into this category? Libraries, guidance? Who will hire library staff and will there be continuity of service in a specific school? Will guidance personnel be considered non-instructional? As we all know, there are many facets to guidance counselling. Will there be continuity, assurance of confidentiality?

It is assumed that any and all personnel in our schools work under the direction of our principals. How much authority will the principal have in respect to non-instructional personnel? Who will evaluate non-instructional personnel?

With the board no longer employing custodial and maintenance personnel, how will this impact our schools and existing employees? Who will ensure that our standards are being met, and if not, address the situation?

How will transportation be affected? Where will the responsibility for our children lie during transportation? Who will address transportation problems, behaviour concerns on the bus? Who will parents call with questions or concerns relating to transportation? The principal or the company providing the service?

Trustees: Bill 104 provides for representation of five to 22 trustees. Our existing section has seven trustees, to most of us only a local phone call away. A strong commitment to Catholic education ensures people coming forward for the position of trustee. However, there is some question as to what exactly the role of the trustee will be and how much decision-making power they will have.

School councils: One of the functions of the Education Improvement Commission will be to "consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on the feasibility of strengthening the role of school councils...."

It is imperative that parents, members of school councils, be current with newly released information in regard to all educational issues. Education and training is essential for our Catholic school council members to work effectively within their schools. Well-informed members, working in collaboration, will truly ensure excellence in Catholic education in all our schools.

Good communication and networking are very important. Our board has in place a regional Catholic school council. We've already held one educational session and at least three are scheduled for the near future.

It is understood that along with the ministry's desire to legislate school councils, funds will be provided to boards to assist with education and training of these councils. Our Catholic school councils provide us with the opportunity to actively participate within our schools. Along with the commitment of Catholic school council members, education is the key to success.

Increasing parental involvement in education governance is an issue that demands deliberation and much more discussion with parents.

Transition: During transition, restrictions are imposed on existing boards, such as appointments, hiring and promotion, approval of budgets, transferring of money between or among reserves or reserve funds or changing the purpose or designation of a reserve or reserve fund. What of our trustees? Will there no longer be local accountability for decisions made? Will decisions be made by the province or by our elected trustees?

Education Improvement Commission: This commission, consisting of five to seven members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, will oversee the transition to the new system of education governance in Ontario.

"Decisions of the Education Improvement Commission are final and shall not be reviewed or questioned by a court."

The minister may apply to the Ontario Court (General Division) for an order requiring any person or body to comply.

Why would there not be opportunity for appeal of a decision or order of the Education Improvement Commission or any of Bill 104's regulations?

1750

In conclusion, as you can see, there are many questions regarding Bill 104. Parents have a desire for effective partnership in the Catholic education of our children. Proposed changes are occurring so rapidly and the time to disseminate, assimilate, discuss and clearly understand the ramifications of this bill is just too short. At this time, whether or not parents support Bill 104 is another unanswered question.

This forum allows us to bring forward our questions regarding Bill 104 and we sincerely thank you for the opportunity.

Mr Bartolucci: Roberte, thank you very much for your presentation. People around the table, other than maybe Shelley, don't know your enormous contribution to educa-

tion in the Catholic school system in Sudbury. Certainly you're to be commended for that and for your presentation.

Obviously, you have the same concern we have with regard to the Education Improvement Commission, that is, that we're going to lose local input into education if Bill 104 goes through. Would that be correct?

Ms Cunningham: Yes, that is a grave concern among parents.

Mr Bartolucci: Are you concerned at all about Catholic governance in this whole model that's being proposed by the government?

Ms Cunningham: I would have to say yes to that. Yes, we certainly are concerned about that. That has been discussed quite a bit in the past. Although at some point I believe it says constitutional rights will be respected, among the parents there is some concern as to whether that will actually be the case in the near future.

Mr Bartolucci: I read that section with interest as well. I go back to a presentation by the Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association, and they've included a recommendation that the following section be added: "including rights and privileges as they were enjoyed by the separate school boards or their supporters under predecessors of this act as they existed immediately prior to January 13, 1997." Do you see that as being fundamental for you to ever consider supporting 104?

Ms Cunningham: Yes.

Mr Bisson: One of the concerns we heard in the hearings in Timmins was the whole prospect of curriculum being developed not at the board level but at the ministry level, and what we heard from the separate school board supporters is that they're worried, not in the short term but in the longer term; that it poses a problem for Catholic education in that, because it's not clearly spelled out in the legislation, the curriculum being developed will in some cases be developed by non-Catholics. Has that been part of the discussion within your particular area?

Ms Cunningham: Yes, it has been. That certainly is a concern among parents in this region, although we are familiar with the cooperatives out there working to ensure that there is Catholic curriculum for our separate schools and we certainly support them in their work.

Mr Jordan: Thank you very much for your presentation. The point that comes to my mind — I'm meeting tomorrow with the parent council at one of our schools in Lanark county. They have indicated to me that they see this as a great opportunity to participate in many areas of education for their children. Prior to this type of legislation being brought forward, they would have to, maybe 10 days prior to a board meeting, get their item on the agenda so they could attend the meeting to discuss certain things with the trustees. They couldn't just come in and make a presentation.

I don't know if you've experienced that, but they see it as a great opportunity to assess curriculum, assess books being used in their English courses, assess why in the lower grades penmanship isn't there any more and why basic math and sciences and geography — their children can't even name the provinces and the capitals. People are getting concerned. These are only basics in a lot of cases. You seem to have a definite fear that something may happen and I'm wondering where that's coming from.

Ms Cunningham: I'm not sure I understand your question. The fear of school councils, is that what you're —

Mr Jordan: That you're going to be given responsibilities you can't cope with. But if you network with the trustees who are going to be elected and work together, you're going to, in my opinion and the opinion of some of my parents — not all of them — you're going to have a very strong input into the education of children generally in the schools.

Ms Cunningham: How to answer that? The feeling I get from the parents in our region — we have just newly formed a regional Catholic school council, and that's wonderful and people are very excited about that; parents are very excited about school councils. We all feel that they're going to be very effective and there certainly is that opportunity for parents to get into the schools and to be more involved in a lot of the things you have mentioned.

Maybe the fear comes from a lack of education and the lack of information. Even in Bill 104, there's only one line that refers to school councils. We just don't have enough information. That's where the concern is. It's not so much that they'll be given responsibilities they can't handle, because I think parents can handle all kinds of responsibilities.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Cunningham, for being here and for presenting your views to the committee.

SAULT STE MARIE/CENTRAL ALGOMA TEACHERS' COALITION

The Chair: Our next presenter is the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, the Ontario Public School Teachers and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, represented by Terri Miller and Gayle Manley. Welcome. It's good to have you here. We're looking forward to your presentation.

Ms Gayle Manley: We've just breezed in.

The Chair: You did indeed. You have a way to come. We understand that, and you have day jobs as well. You have 15 minutes for your presentation. You can divide it between you in any way you wish. If time permits, there'll be some questions.

Ms Manley: Thank you again for holding the presentations a little closer to home, at least for us in the Sault. We would have liked them in Sault Ste Marie, but you can't have all your wishes. We actually represent a coalition.

Mr Wildman: You don't look like Art Callegari.

Ms Manley: Art Callegari was originally going to do this. He said, "Maybe you could take my name tag in case people have trouble."

The Sault Ste Marie/Central Algoma Teachers' Coalition is an alliance of approximately 1,400 teachers, from three school boards in that area. All five affiliates are represented in this group. When you listed them all, AEFO is also a member of our alliance.

We welcome this opportunity to present to you our concerns, as you would imagine we would probably have, and recommendations regarding Bill 104, known as the Fewer School Boards Act, 1997.

In the shortened title for Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, there is an underlying premise that less is better, that there will be less bureaucracy with fewer

trustees. This concept echoes the same ideas in the Fewer Politicians Act. But it echoes the key words of the 1990s, such as "downsizing" and "restructuring," which are always linked to "accountability" and "our ability to compete in the global market." The two latter phrases play on public anxieties and parental concerns. Similarly, the longer title of Bill 104 attempts to work on these fears as well when it states that this act will "improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system."

It is somewhat doubtful that a document 27 pages in length will accomplish such actions. In fact, it is our belief that there will be less accountability, and effectiveness and quality will probably be more related to a business ethic involving "clients" and "front-line service providers," to quote our Minister of Education and Training.

We reject the concept that education is a business. In *The Good Society*, John Kenneth Galbraith elaborates on the decisive role of education: "The good society cannot accept that education in the modern economy is primarily in the service of economics; it has a larger political and social role, a yet deeper justification in itself."

Bill 104 is essentially enabling legislation to establish new district school boards with a reduced number of trustees. The bill outlines the qualifications for trustees and who may or may not run for office. Employees of an existing board and their spouses and identified municipal employees are ineligible to run for election to a district school board unless they take a leave of absence without pay.

Not only does this deny a wide range of individuals the right to the democratic process, it also excludes many people who have a high level of knowledge about education from participating in education governance.

1800

The establishment of the Education Improvement Commission to provide for the transition period to a new form of governance in Ontario is of great concern. Firstly, it does seem presumptuous that the chairs of this commission have already been appointed and commenced their work around the province when Bill 104 has not as yet been made law. It begs the question, "Will the government even listen to these briefs presented and make any changes based on public consultation?"

Our experience with presentations for Bills 34, 79, 100 and 81 seems to point out that few changes, if any, are ever made after hearings. Two and a half weeks of 15 minutes per presentation is probably very challenging for those on the social development committee, however it does not seem enough time for true consultation to put in place the vast reforms intended. Screening lists and not allowing all requests to present at these hearings is certainly not permitting full consultation.

Secondly, the powers of the Education Improvement Commission are extraordinary, equal to those of the Ontario Court of Appeal. Its decisions are final and shall not be reviewed by a court. Surprisingly, these powers began on January 13, 1997, before Bill 104 became law. It would also appear that the role of trustees has been usurped by the commission and local appointed committees until the year 2001. One particular aspect of the proposed commission's powers is disturbing; that is, the distribution

of assets and liabilities of present boards in the formation of the new district boards. As taxpayers in Sault Ste Marie, it should be up to our elected officials to decide how these taxes collected in Sault Ste Marie should be used in the future. Run a poll of opinion of any taxpayer in any region in Ontario, whether it be Hornepayne, London or Sault Ste Marie; they will feel very strongly about taxes raised in their area going to students in their board.

Two specific provisions relating to the commission which greatly concern the members of the Sault Ste Marie/Central Algoma Teachers' Coalition are the transfer of staff of existing boards and the outsourcing of non-instructional services. In the last amalgamation of school boards in 1992, and that was Kirkland Lake and Timiskaming, collective agreements were honoured and guidelines were set up for employee transfer. As well, the Education Act states that the employment contract of every employee of a board that has boundaries altered becomes an obligation of the board in which the school is vested. We recommend that past practice be respected. However, the powers of the commission are such that its decisions can override the Education Act and cannot be challenged. Herein lies our concern. We get no sense from this legislation that these things will be honoured.

In clause 335(3)(f), the Education Improvement Commission will "research...and make recommendations to the minister on how to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services." There's no question here whether it is deciding whether it's an appropriate thing to do; it's going to just promote it. How are non-instructional services defined? Will this mean technicians for teacher-librarians, or counsellors for guidance teachers? Or does it mean the caretaker, the school secretary, the educational assistants who are part of every staff? Does this signal unemployment for these workers, undercut by private firms, all for the sake of a tax break for the well-to-do?

What is not in the legislation is of as much concern as what is proposed. We do not know the configuration of the new boards — they may change — the new funding model, the number of trustees per board, how the transitions will take place and what protections there will be for incumbent staff. These details are left to the Lieutenant Governor, on recommendation of the cabinet, to be dealt with through regulation, not legislation. Leaving many of the specifics of education governance in regulations means there can be no debate in the Legislature, no committee hearings or appeal to the general public. The democratic process is thwarted one more time.

There needs to be more consultation on the viability of the proposed boards. Geography has to be a factor. I know that just from driving here today. I drove half of my new board along the highway. In the proposed district boards of Algoma, it would require a seven-hour road trip from one end to the other. For our trustees to service areas of this size would demand more time and cost than is currently available. Transportation in the north offers a number of challenges to its citizens: winter travel, highway closures, cutbacks in highway snow cleanup and the inability to use cellular phones in most parts of the north would make travel in the winter more risky for our trustees.

Accessibility for both the taxpayer and the trustees will be a problem. How easy will it be to contact a trustee who

lives in Wawa if you live in Blind River? In section 7, subclause 327(3)(d)(ii), "the establishment...of geographic areas within the areas of jurisdiction of district school boards" is permitted for electoral purposes. Why not allow the establishment of geographic areas, or satellites in the actual governance of education? This would allow for people to continue to have that familiar local trustee to whom local concerns could be addressed. Satellite boards could look after issues specific to that community.

Removing the education portion of property taxes and placing complete control in the hands of the Ministry of Education and Training does not necessarily mean an improvement in accountability. For our Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association colleagues, there are definite concerns about their constitutional access to financial resources. It is important for them that these resources are independent from the decision-making authority of the provincial government.

This government is on record in its desire to make cuts to education. The changes over the last year and a half have not shown a sensitivity to the needs of the education system as junior kindergarten is made optional and special education funding is changed drastically. The classroom has been affected in spite of "commonsense" promises to the contrary. With myths and misinformation as background for every change to education, the government does not inspire confidence in teachers, educational workers and parents in our community. Even the commitment of the Minister of Education as announced in Sault Ste Marie on February 12, 1997, does not ring true based on past practice. The minister stated: "We will fund the needs of every individual student in this province. If that's more than \$13 billion, then we will spend it. If less than \$13 billion, we will send the savings back to the taxpayer." We are prepared to hold the minister accountable to these words.

To summarize our concern in the form of recommendations:

- (1) That employees of an existing or district school board and their spouses as well as municipal employees be eligible to run for election for a district school board without taking unpaid leave of absence from their jobs.

- (2) That the Education Improvement Commission only exercise its powers after the passage of the legislation.

- (3) That duly elected school board trustees be permitted to carry out their duties according to the electorate.

- (4) That Bill 104 be amended to ensure that the new district school boards assume all liabilities and assets of the existing boards.

- (5) That all rights which are covered by collective agreements be guaranteed in Bill 104; in particular, successor rights.

- (6) That past practice in amalgamation of school boards and the Education Act provisions be upheld and not be overruled by the Education Improvement Commission.

- (7) That outsourcing be rejected as a means of saving money; this will negatively affect all our communities.

- (8) That Bill 104 be postponed until sufficient consultation has occurred with all affected areas, in particular regarding electoral boundaries.

- (9) That Bill 104 be postponed until all aspects of the reform are known so that there can be consultation in all aspects of the reforms that will affect Ontario education for years to come.

The Chair: We have about a minute per caucus. We start with the third party. It's unfortunate Mr Bisson isn't here, because I know he wanted to have extra time.

1810

Mr Wildman: He's out conferring with the francophone representatives who appeared before. But since our deputants are from my area, I'm quite happy he's not here.

Could I ask you to expand, if you would, on your comments on page 6, with regard to accessibility and section 7, subclause 327(3)(d)(ii)? I think members of the committee have been impressed in Thunder Bay and here, and also frankly in Ottawa, with comments about the size of the some of these proposed new boards, so if you could expand on that, I'd appreciate it.

Ms Manley: When you look at the comment, it's difficult for taxpayers to access a trustee. We have no concept actually of how it will be set up, how many trustees there will be in the district of Algoma, so we really don't even know if we'll have two trustees —

Mr Wildman: It's between five and 12, so it's likely going to be about seven, unless we recommend or the government agrees to expand the number for northern boards.

Ms Manley: I have to tell you that the Minister of Education and Training also came out and said that there would be a possibility of more in certainly our district of Algoma, so I gather that is up for changes.

Looking at taxpayers having difficulty meeting up with their trustees, I almost imagine that it will be an 800 number in a regional centre that they'll have to be looking at, and that's a little frustrating with the number systems.

The one particular phrase that's in there, looking at the geographical areas, I am not sure what the intent of that would be, but when I read that I thought perhaps that implied that, "Yes, we'd look at smaller areas and communities, and still respect them for electoral purposes." I don't see any reason why that couldn't apply to the school boards as they stand right now.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much for your presentation this afternoon. It's getting late in the day.

Ms Manley: Yes, I know. You look pretty wide awake actually. You're doing pretty well.

Mr O'Toole: It's pretty interesting, no question. Speaking on behalf of teachers, it's obvious that you're defending the position of your association, and I note the complete omission of any reference to students. The word isn't in here. That being said, there is a close call, but you have a duty to represent your union associates —

Ms Manley: I don't agree with you. It is there: when I talk about taxpayers, students, junior kindergarten.

Mr O'Toole: I'm asking a question.

Ms Manley: I'm talking about students, special education.

Mr O'Toole: Junior kindergarten was made optional by the minister. I have had heard for the last two days of the enormous distances, some travelling as long as two hours. Do you support junior kindergarten and students being on the bus for two hours there and two hours home?

Ms Manley: I think you're probably looking at two different things here.

Mr O'Toole: No, I'm asking — junior kindergarten is a universal —

Ms Manley: I support junior —

The Chair: Let the witness respond.

Ms Manley: Thank you, Chair. I definitely support junior kindergarten. It's a decidedly worthwhile program. There isn't a student in our particular board right now who travels two hours, so if you talk about large district boards, which is the plan, then you're going to be looking at junior kindergarten students travelling long —

Mr O'Toole: Do you have examples?

The Chair: Mrs McLeod, for the official opposition. Mr O'Toole, you've had your turn.

Mrs McLeod: By sheer coincidence, I wanted to draw attention to the reference you make to students and the very basic concern you have for students when you speak on page 7 of a statement that the minister made that "We will fund the needs of every individual student in this province," and that you intend to hold the minister accountable for that. You also note that it doesn't ring quite true with either past actions or past statements on the part of either the minister or indeed the Premier, who in November said they needed to get another billion dollars out of education.

I guess I am concerned that there have been a lot of statements made by the minister and none of us knows what that means in terms of students and meeting the needs of students. We do know that there is not a really good grasp at this point in time of what it would cost to meet the individual needs of students, so when the minister makes that statement, I don't know what it means. When he makes the statement about equitable funding for every student, I don't know what that means in terms of the level of equitable funding or whether he means the same funding at the same low level for every student.

My question for you then is, do you see anything in this amalgamation — I think you attempted to keep your remarks focused specifically on what is in 104, and there's not actually much specific there — that might actually free up dollars for kids in the classroom?

Ms Manley: I can't see that. I'll let Terri respond to this.

Ms Terri Miller: I would say absolutely not. As far as the amalgamation of boards is concerned — and I work and live in a district rural board — what we are seeing is a phenomenal increase in costs of transportation and accessing social services that we offer now that we would have to pay for out of our nearest neighbour, which would be Sault Ste Marie. When we look at any kind of amalgamation, where we'd have to incur those costs it's definitely going to be an increase.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Manley and Ms Miller, for your presentation, your forthright recommendations and for the extraordinary distance you've had to drive. I hope, if you're driving back tonight in the dark, that it's a safe drive.

Mr Wildman: Just for the information of the committee, 1-800-TRUSTEE does fit the numbers.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that, Mr Wildman.

COCHRANE-IROQUOIS FALLS,
BLACK RIVER-MATHESON
BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: The Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson Board of Education, Patricia Toffolo. I should

explain for the benefit of committee members that St Anne School was not able to be here, and Cochrane-Iroquois Falls et al were the next on our list. They have very kindly agreed to jump in the breach and be here with us this afternoon.

Ms Patricia Toffolo: We are a last-minute replacement, so anyway, here we go.

I'm Patricia Toffolo. I'm a public school trustee from Iroquois Falls and I'm also chair of the Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson Board of Education. The director of education, Craig Shelswell from our board, is on my right. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak to you this evening. Before I go any further I really must say, folks, this is all about students. If it weren't, we wouldn't be here, and we aren't convinced today that Bill 104 is all about students. That's why we're here.

The comments that I make to you are not only from my own board but from all the boards in district school board 1. There are seven English public school boards in district school board 1, and they are Timiskaming; Kirkland Lake; Timmins; Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson; Kapuskasing; Hearst; and Hornepayne. The area that this board encompasses is substantial. To travel from one end to the other is a greater distance than from Kingston to Windsor.

Because of the tremendous implications of the Fewer School Boards Act, it was difficult to decide on the content of our presentation. Other groups have told you, no doubt, about the assault to democracy and the seizing of total control of education by the province, but we would like to highlight several other concerns that school boards, particularly in the north, have about this legislation.

The first concern is the very large geographic area which our new board will encompass. It will take approximately eight hours to drive from one end of the board to the other. Travel to meetings and visits to schools will be difficult and expensive. Cost-efficient technology, if and when it is available in northern Ontario — because we still have rotary phones and party lines in Iroquois Falls — will assist greatly, but the human element is still essential in education. Education is a face-to-face, people-meeting-people process.

The communities in northern Ontario are separated by a significant distance and they are linked by a two-lane highway which is poorly maintained and cared for. Driving conditions are often hazardous during our long and unpredictable winters, and long hours spent driving can certainly be put to better use.

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Although our communities have many similarities, each has its own distinct identity. There are different needs and values in each community. Each board has programs and services that are unique to its jurisdiction. It will be extremely difficult for a board that encompasses such a large geographic area to provide for differing needs and meet differing expectations. I might add that we have unusual schools, perhaps, very different schools in some communities in the north. We have mixed schools, schools where instruction is in both French and English, and our students are free to move back and forth and take something in French, take something in English, as they choose. I don't think the division the government is proposing is

going to be quite as clean and neat as perhaps it thinks, especially in communities like ours. Citizens are going to feel far removed from the decision-making process and local accountability will be lost.

The cost of running for election in such a large jurisdiction will be prohibitive to many people. There is a very real possibility of trustees running on behalf of political parties, heaven forbid, or special interest groups. But once technology, distance, travel and other associated costs are addressed, either the cost of administration and governance in a large jurisdiction will increase or the quality of these services will decrease.

Our proposed new district board is larger than many countries. Does this make sense? Distance, size and access issues need to be addressed for constituents — this is really important; this is where the 1-800-WHO CARES number comes in — for staff and for elected officials.

Our second concern is the number of trustees allowed per board. Will five to 12 trustees provide effective representation for such a large area? Will this representation be accessible, accountable and representative of the population served? How can effective native trustee representation in northern boards be achieved within the five-to-12-trustee parameters? We fear that many small communities will be disfranchised and not have access to decision-makers. We need local solutions for local problems, and we must not lose the autonomy of our education system.

Also, we are most anxious about the job security of many of our staff members. Futures are at stake here. Each employee and each family is an important part of our community. It is imperative that students, parents, educators, taxpayers, the entire community, take ownership of change and build upon what exists to expand and improve public education. Sweeping changes in the structure of education must receive in-depth examination and careful consideration. This takes time, but Bill 104 is being implemented in haste, and we fear that it will not lead to continuous improvement of education in our communities. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, and we'd be happy to answer any questions, or try to, if you have any.

Mr Skarica: You are one of a numbers of boards that have expressed concerns regarding the size of the boards. You make a brief reference to technology. What technology is available right now, and if there isn't any, what would be required to have teleconferencing facilities, that type of thing?

Ms Toffolo: Perhaps my partner would answer that for you.

Mr Craig Shelswell: The biggest problem with teleconferencing and technology in northern Ontario, and I hate to direct it at a company, but Northern Telephone is the one that deals with our area, and they have not put in the infrastructure that allows videoconferencing on four or six lines, and it becomes a major problem. We've talked to them about it before Bill 104 in our own cases, and their comment is that it's a private enterprise business, "We're there to make money and we're not able at this time to provide you with the service you need."

Last Saturday we had a session. We were looking at how videoconferencing could be used within the size of the area that we are going to be dealing with, and when you're dealing with the two-line process, you have time lag in

your speech, there are herky-jerky motions and the picture isn't as clear. When you get into areas where they have better technology, where you can use four or six lines, then it is perfect, just like watching any other form of media that you want to.

All of this is going to cost money. When we were dealing with this issue, the cost of a full setup at one site was \$75,000 to \$80,000. If we're looking at seven boards coming into one and if looking at spreading it out and ideally saying there should be seven sites where people could go to, you're talking \$500,000, along with the staff and the maintenance that go with it. That's one critical area as we try and address the need for technology and the ability to use it. It is a problem and it's an area where the infrastructure needs to be upgraded. It's going to be a costly one.

Mrs McLeod: I'm very pleased you are here. I had just actually finished saying to my colleague that I was particularly sorry that you weren't on our presentation list, because you represent a unique geographical area in the amalgamation. I'm glad you're here because you've talked about the accessibility issues, which are so critical.

Since you've done that, I'd like to ask you about your sense of the cost savings and potential benefits to students from cost savings that might be realized through the amalgamation. I'll just leave it open for you. Do you see that you're going to save dollars through this amalgamation?

Ms Toffolo: We've just spent \$500,000 on technology and that has to come out of the classroom. Where else?

Mrs McLeod: Indeed. If I have time for a further question then — I'm debating between two.

Ms Toffolo: I'll answer both.

Mrs McLeod: I think about the kinds of things we've been hearing from northern Ontario communities about the transportation problem. At the current time, one of the proposals that the government is looking at — at the municipal table, not at the education table — is to try and get out of this municipal offload problem that it has created by shifting the costs of school custodians, secretarial staff, busing and school capital construction on to the municipal tax base in return for taking something of the social services back to the province. I find myself wondering, in a northern Ontario set of communities, what happens if the municipalities end up having to decide between road improvements which they are being handed or putting custodians into your schools.

Ms Toffolo: I know what will happen: dirty schools and unsafe schools. I don't know. You're making me make priorities. I know where my priority is, but I'm sorry, I don't trust that the municipality has the same priority.

Mr Bisson: I want to thank you for taking the time to drive all the way in from Iroquois Falls. I think people need to get a concept. That's a four-hour drive just to come in and do a presentation that you found out about this morning. I think it shows the commitment that you have for public education.

I want to say to the members of the committee just quickly, there are many communities within the catchment area of this board and others that don't have phone service. For example, Wagoshi has one radio phone. You cannot do teleconferencing. Communities like Val Gagné, Holytre,

Ramore often are seven or eight people on a party line, so it's not an option. You need to keep that in the back of your mind.

I just want to pick up on something that was said here. All of that cost of doing business as a big board in district 1 — teleconferencing, the special provisions that need to be made to communicate with all your schools over a large geographic area — is going to cost money. Are you getting any kind of indication from the government that you're going to get extra money to deal with your special circumstances, or will it come out of classroom funding?

Ms Toffolo: Do you have any indication?

Mr Shelswell: There have been comments made that any setup costs must be dealt with as a special item as we move into the new funding model and the way the new funding model is set up, with each board receiving an envelope and that money being used to provide education. That model itself has been developed and we'll be seeing it shortly. There isn't a provision in that model for setup costs, technology costs and other areas like that. So from my perspective, I have to assume that the government will be addressing that as a separate item. From my own personal, in-depth knowledge of the funding model, I know it's not in there. That's just another item that has to be looked at, and it's a necessary item if we're going to be able to function. I think that's critical.

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Mr Bisson: The other issue is that of representation on district 1. I think it's somewhere around 22 communities in district 1. We'll probably get eight or nine trustees because of the size of the board. What does that mean for communities like Val Gagné, Ramore, Holytre —

Interjection: Hornepayne.

Mr Bisson: Well, Hornepayne is yet another. What does it mean for them? What does it mean to the local ratepayer who's trying to get access to a board decision?

Ms Toffolo: Our board office is in Iroquois Falls and people are extremely hesitant to call the board office from the other communities because it's a long-distance call. We get lots of letters and that kind of thing, but I think it's going to be a real problem for people. I think you are taking education away from the people and that's very unfortunate.

Mr Bisson: Just a very quick one: You raised here, as you raised at the public hearings in Iroquois Falls that took place two weeks ago, that the cost of running in a school board election in district 1 will be prohibitive and you think that what will end up happening is that political parties will sponsor their candidates. I've heard this a number of times. It's not discussed in my riding association, but are lot of trustees saying, "Heck, I can't run unless I get the backing of a party to offset the cost of those elections"? Is that what trustees are saying?

Ms Toffolo: I would think so, because it's very different to run in a small community where you walk around and put your little signs up and you attend your local campaign meetings and everybody knows you. But people don't know me anywhere else. If I am serious and I really want to remain a trustee, yes, it's going to cost some money, and I'm not sure where that's going to come from.

The Chair: Ms Toffolo and Mr Shelswell, on behalf of the committee, I want to express our gratitude for your

being here under the circumstances in which you are and driving such a long way. We really find it remarkable that you're here at all. Thanks for your presentation.

Our next presenter is the Sudbury and District Labour Council. I don't see the representative, so perhaps while we wait we might deal with Ms McLeod's motion. Does everyone have a copy of it? It's about to be distributed and Ms McLeod will read it.

Mrs McLeod: Sorry about the scrawl. I am happy to place the motion now. It might be appropriate for me to read the motion into the record, but it's one which I would really like the government to consider. If the parliamentary assistant thinks it's worth considering and would prefer to have some additional time, I'd be happy to defer the vote on the resolution.

Mr Skarica: I'd prefer to consult with the House leader.

Mrs McLeod: Shall I place the motion but defer the vote?

The Chair: I think it would be good for you to place it on the record.

Mrs McLeod: I move that the standing committee on social development ask the House leaders to amend the time allocation motion so that clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 104 be deferred to allow for consideration of public presentations in the preparation of amendments.

Included in my reason for placing the motion is that when originally the time allocation motion was passed, it appeared as though the third reading vote would take place next Thursday. That's not going to happen. In fairness to the presenters and to all members of the committee, to have at least some time before we have to go into clause-by-clause amendment would be appreciated.

Mr Skarica: One of the problems I understand, Ms McLeod, is that the House has to sit for this to be dealt with.

Mrs McLeod: Then the motion may not even be necessary, which would be fine with me, Mr Skarica. As I say, I'm happy to defer. I just would really like to do as much as we can to see a fair process in the amending procedures.

Mr Wildman: I'm not speaking to the motion. I understand Ms McLeod's concern, and also Mr Skarica's, but if the time allocation were to be amended, it would involve debate in the House. Even if we had unanimous consent, we would have to have the House sitting, and that's a problem. I'm not sure exactly how we get around that.

Having said that, I want to raise a concern which I think is a concern of all members of the committee. There are some considerable number of us who are interested in making some recommendations to the government around issues of the boundaries of certain proposed district boards if Bill 104 is to pass. I raised this as a question of order the other day. I don't think we can deal with that through amendments to the bill, but if we as a committee wish to seriously make recommendations about issues like the boundaries and what communities might be included and which boards might be amalgamated and/or the numbers of trustees, for instance, that might be considered in some areas, I'm not sure how that fits into a time allocation motion and I don't know how we deal with that. As the House leader for our party, I'd be prepared to informally consult with the House leaders of the other two parties

about that, if I could, between now and next Tuesday or Wednesday.

I really think there is a desire among many of us to make some recommendations on those matters and we can't really deal with that through clause-by-clause. I think we need to look at how we might.

The Chair: Could we ask you to do that and then report back to us?

Mrs McLeod, with respect to your motion, what I suggest we do is stand it down until we hear from Mr Skarica and debate the issue at that time.

Mr Skarica: Perhaps I could get some direction from legislative counsel as well, as to whether the motion is in order, if in fact the House has to sit, because of the time allocation motion.

The Chair: I think that's part of what you would be finding out and reporting back to us.

Clerk of the Committee: The motion as it stands is in order.

Mr Wildman: It's in order for us to ask House leaders to do it. The problem is, even if the House leaders agree, the House has to sit to do it.

The Chair: The House needs to sit; that's correct.

Mrs McLeod: Would it potentially be possible for the House leaders to agree to bring that motion to the House on April 1, if clause-by-clause could be done that week?

The Chair: That is a possibility, yes.

We are still awaiting John Filo of the Sudbury and District Labour Council, but he is not scheduled to make his presentation until 6:50, so we have some 10 minutes. While we wait, we might deal with some housekeeping matters and one not-so-housekeeping matter.

I've asked the researcher to prepare a one-page fact sheet on the Homepayne Board of Education to assist us all in understanding what exactly is entailed. We hope to have that some time tomorrow to be of assistance. That doesn't change what the ministry may want to bring forward, but the researcher is quite prepared to do that and we thank him for doing that, because it's going to be on top of everything else he has to do at very short notice.

In terms of housekeeping, I would remind you that tomorrow we have breakfast between 6 and 7 and the bus leaves promptly at 7 — assuming you can get service in this hotel. I'm reassured by the clerk that they're doing a buffet. Maybe there will be food.

Mrs McLeod: The Chair is getting very hungry.

The Chair: For the record, I had not planned on this being a day of fast.

The bus will leave promptly at 7, so we ask you to be ready. The meeting will reconvene in Barrie at 12 o'clock. I regretfully will not be with you. I will miss both the trip there and the day. I have found you a most congenial bunch and you've even learned to behave. But I will join you again in Windsor on Monday.

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Mr Wildman: According to our schedule, we're in Windsor on Monday and Brantford Tuesday; then we do clause-by-clause Wednesday. When do we begin the clause-by-clause, what time of day?

Clerk of the Committee: At 1 pm.

Mr Wildman: What time do we go until?

Clerk of the Committee: Until it's finished.

Mr Wildman: Until it's finished?

The Chair: Does that mean 6 o'clock?

Clerk of the Committee: We can keep going; it's in the motion.

The Chair: So presumably we could go for 24 hours.

Clerk of the Committee: Yes.

Mr Wildman: Is there any particular reason that we start at 1 instead of 10 in the morning?

Clerk of the Committee: The amendments have to be filed at 9 in the morning, and that gives the clerk's office time to go over the amendments.

The Chair: I would also suggest that given the gruelling schedule we have had — we'll be home quite late from Brantford on the Tuesday night. We may not be at our best first thing in the morning.

Mr Wildman: The only problem is that if we have a significant number of amendments, when you say we sit till the end, we may be sitting until midnight.

Mrs McLeod: We're limited to that particular day?

Mr Wildman: Yes.

The Chair: No, the point is, we can keep going.

Mr Wildman: I thought we had one day, according to the time allocation motion.

Clerk of the Committee: "Until completion of clause-by-clause."

Mrs McLeod: So as it goes on, if they're not completed, we can have a motion of the committee to adjourn at a particular hour and resume the next day to complete?

Mr Wildman: That's not my reading. I thought the time allocation motion said one day.

Clerk of the Committee: You're right. At 5 o'clock, all the amendments have to be put and they are deemed moved, so we have to just go through until we're finished. If that takes us until 12 o'clock, we keep sitting until it's finished.

Mrs McLeod: So you're saying we can't start until 1, then?

Clerk of the Committee: We can't start until 1.

"The standing committee on social development shall be authorized to meet to consider the bill for clause-by-clause consideration commencing Wednesday, March 26, 1997, from 1 pm until completion of clause-by-clause. All proposed amendments shall be filed with the clerk of the committee by 9 am. At 5 pm on Wednesday, March 26, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall without further debate or amendment put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any divisions required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 128(a)."

Mr Wildman: That's clear. I think the unfortunate thing is that means that as of 5 o'clock the Chair will just have to put the motions. There won't be any debate on them.

The Chair: That's right.

SUDBURY AND DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL

The Chair: If there are no more housekeeping matters, we shall move on to our last presenter in Sudbury, the Sudbury and District Labour Council. Welcome, Mr John

Filo. We're delighted to have you among us. We look forward to your presentation.

Mr John Filo: Thank you, Madam Chair. Before I start, I was the individual who applauded when Dr Thornburg spoke against what we consider to be a very undemocratic procedure in Bill 104, and that is the appointment of the Education Improvement Commission.

We represent the sons and daughters of people who left Europe and who left the tyrannies of some of the eastern bloc countries to settle in Canada. Frankly, my father and mother had it up to here with tyranny. It's a special sore point when we see elements of that creeping into the legislation of our beloved province. Canada and Ontario, of course, are places that the entire world envies.

Madam Chair, you admonished me with your gestures that I should not be clapping, yet during the presentation I noted the body language of members of the government, how every time a controversial point was given, they'd go like that and like this and so on. This is a free country. You people are here to serve us, believe it or not. I know you forget that. You tend to forget it because everybody praises you, fills the room with adulation, tells you how powerful you are and how important you are, and that goes to your head. But you're supposed to be the servants of the people. This is a democracy, and we'd really appreciate it if you took that responsibility seriously.

We have people like Runciman saying that discipline is the prerogative of management. Well, I'm a labour leader and I've been a steward for over 25 years. Yes, it may be true that discipline is the prerogative of management, but our system is set up so that management has to be accountable to somebody too, and that's true with the people who sit in the House in Toronto who have our respect but who do not often do things to deserve it.

Now that that's over, I'd like to welcome you to Sudbury. We have a community that we're very proud of.

Mr Beaubien: At least we don't have to go to church on Sunday.

Mr Filo: What part of the church would you look at?

Mr Beaubien: Close to the door.

The Chair: Perhaps, Mr Filo, we will continue with your presentation.

Mr Filo: You see what I mean? There's a person who was elected by the common people who now thinks that he's here to have some sort of debate with me instead of listen to me.

The Chair: In fairness, we had to leave at 5:45 in Thunder Bay. I think tempers —

Mr Filo: I know that. You people aren't the only ones with responsibilities. I had to leave to go to another meeting. I was here earlier and I'm back here.

The Chair: We're thankful that you're here, sir.

Mr Filo: The time says 6:50 on my schedule.

The Chair: And we're here for you.

Mr Filo: What does that mean? Does that mean 6:45?

Mrs McLeod: It means we're running out of time to hear your presentation, sir.

Mr Filo: No, 6:50. What time do you have on your watch? I read 6:45.

The Chair: Perhaps you'd like to continue, sir.

Mr Filo: Well, I would, but I wanted to finish my welcome to you, because we're proud of our community

and we think that you coming to this community to consult with the people is a reflection of the democratic process, and we appreciate that. However, into my presentation.

The trade union movement is becoming increasingly concerned with this government's attempts at selling its reductions in funding as improvements to the educational system. The use of the words "improve" and "improvement" in the title of the bill and in the name of the commission, the Education Improvement Commission, is used to justify wholesale tampering in a system that has worked reasonably well and has served the citizens of this province more than adequately. Just look around you in the room. You individuals are evidence of that, and so are the ones who have made presentations to you.

The use of questionable comparators with other societies and jurisdictions belies the fact that Ontario is one of the best places in the world to live, raise a family and educate our children, and do business in.

For any of you who have had the opportunity to live in other countries or travel, it will come as no surprise that, while many countries are a delight to visit, one does not necessarily want to live there. In fact, in my opinion, having travelled most of the countries in the world, the countries of the world really worth living in can be counted on the fingers of both your hands.

What makes Canada and Ontario so special? Many would say that it's our natural resources. However, other provinces and other countries are just as well endowed, or even better than we are, and many enjoy a climate that we tend to describe as a paradise compared to our own.

Ontario is favoured because it has been politically stable, has a highly educated workforce with a strong work ethic and has developed over the years, in a Canadian context, a social safety net which compensates for the excesses of the free market system. We know that the free market is an excellent mechanism to create wealth, but it really comes up short in distributing it equitably.

We know that there is no such thing as a self-regulating, free and neutral private marketplace. My colleague Neil Brooks of Osgoode Hall has opined that its proponents assert that any interference by government regulation or taxation to the property rights acquired in this marketplace is unjustified interference with the nature of things. In fact, this free market is comprised of commercial exchanges that are regulated by countless detailed and complex rules of property and contract law. None of these rules sprang from nature or were ordained by God. They are the result of legislative outputs shaped by the political process. And, as anyone with even a passing knowledge of legal history knows, the rules were largely fashioned to protect and further the private interests of the wealthy and the economically powerful.

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Unions have aided in the redistribution of wealth and income because our society in Canada, and particularly in Ontario, has strived to determine an appropriate balance between employers' rights and workers' rights through the enhancements sought by unions to the quality of life of working people. More than 100 years ago, for example, unions campaigned for health care, unemployment insurance, pensions and, among other things, free public education.

That unions are an essential fact in a democracy was aptly illustrated by the insistence of the Allies at the end of the Second World War that trade unions and collective bargaining be recognized in the constitutions of Germany and Japan, elements which are not recognized in our Constitution nor in the American Constitution, but clearly a device there which, when it happens offshore, we cheer because we know that this prevents the rise of tyranny in these countries. Now in Ontario we see that some of the rights and privileges that our grandfathers and grandmothers, fathers and mothers fought and bled for on picket lines half a century ago are about to be scrapped.

We sincerely hope the Bill 104 hearings result in a well-reasoned set of recommendations, for, unlike some of the other legislation passed or contemplated, the impact of changes to our education system may have long-term negative consequences on our society.

The creative use of definitions of what constitutes classroom services for the purpose of reducing funding offends the sensibility of all those employed in education. In his book *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell defined "doublethink" as the power to hold two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously and accepting them both. Well, 1984 has arrived in Ontario; it's just 13 years too late.

In Davos, Switzerland, Premier Harris said, "Education is the best way to move people from a have-not to a have position." Why then is the game plan to take hundreds of millions of dollars out of education under the guise of improving it?

It is entirely unreasonable to exempt the Education Improvement Commission from court appeal and proceedings for damages and from the application of the Regulations Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. Checks and balances characterize a democracy.

It is essential that locally elected trustees be allowed the traditional rights of control over staff relations, the purchase and disposition of local assets and liabilities and budgets. To ensure continued local control, it is necessary to raise part of the cost of operating from local residential and farm and property tax, and the commercial and industrial tax. Local school boards would determine the appropriate mill rate.

The protection afforded by the current collective agreements must be retained for all employee bargaining units. Restructuring must not be used to strip away the provisions that the employees have obtained through free collective bargaining. Successor rights that the Ontario Labour Relations Act provides for all OLRA bargaining units employed by the school boards must be maintained. The right to withhold one's services, we trade unionists argue, is a fundamental right in a free democratic society, and no direct or implied limitations to that right would be acceptable in Bill 104.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Filo. We have some time for questions. We begin with the official opposition.

Mr Bartolucci: Thanks very much for your presentation, John: as usual, colourful, to the point and with conviction. Certainly that's John Filo's trademark.

Let's talk about 104 and specifically the EIC, the commission. Do you see this as stripping away that local authority that you feel is so important?

Mr Filo: Obviously it is. The thing that confuses me about it is that we have the Progressive Conservatives — and let me say that the Progressive Conservatives have contributed positively to this province. Under Bill Davis, Leslie Frost and John Robarts we've built a society that we can all be truly proud of, but the trend is away from that type of balanced society. To set up an EIC that is basically accountable to no one, that is picked by whim or whimsy, is contrary to what we deem is natural justice.

I don't think the people in the EIC have the wisdom, the knowledge and the experience that can make all these very monumental decisions and not be incorrect at least part of the time.

Ms Martel: Thank you, John, for your presentation. Let me continue on this line of questioning. The government has gone further and said that the commission is basically protected from all forms of liability. That leaves me with the suspicion that the government is concerned about some of the work that is going to go on. What do you think about the position we find ourselves in, which is that this commission will be protected, in essence, from any kind of liability? Does it give you any comfort about the kinds of decisions they're going to be making on behalf of the government?

Mr Filo: Certainly not. This ended, basically, in the English form of government in 1254 with the signing of the Magna Carta. The King of England gave up his autocratic right and then shared his power with the barons. The EIC is a throwback to pre-Magna Carta days. Nobody, but nobody, should not be subject to review.

Ms Martel: Let me ask you about the contracting out provisions. What do you think that is going to mean? They have been specifically given the authority to make that happen. What do you think that is going to mean both for the health and safety of our schools and, frankly, their general maintenance?

Mr Filo: The one thing about this government is that they know the price of everything and the cost of everything, but the value of nothing. The problem here is that the people who look after our schools provide a great deal of continuity and show ownership to the institutions that they work in.

Contracting out, having people come in on a per diem or a per hour basis and so on, is going to jeopardize that sense of community ownership, and we're going to lose a lot. Nowadays too, unfortunately, our society is more and more being preyed on by some of the baser elements in our society and, I'll tell you, our children will be at risk when things like custodial services, for example, are handled by contractors and not by employees who have some feeling of belonging.

Mr Skarica: Sir, my parents are from eastern Europe as well, and in fact last year my relatives were in Prijedor, Bosnia, surrounded by ethnic cleansing and bombing. So I personally am quite aware of what democracy means. I find at times that these hearings get very personal and I don't

think there's anything useful that gets accomplished by that. I'll just make that remark because I thought some of your remarks were somewhat personal.

To deal with the issues here, I'd like to read you a comment about what has been said about restructuring, and I'm sure you'd agree with it. We have a brief here which indicates that "the opposition supports changes in administration, but objects to the undemocratic and paternalistic way in which the government has proceeded." The presenter who told us that said that was said the last time there was restructuring done by the government — I think it was the Davis government — in the late 1960s.

The reason for the Education Improvement Commission is multifold, but one of them appears in the March 17, 1997, *Ottawa Citizen*, where the columnist had this to say about the Carleton secondary board and what happened there in the 1960s: "In the months leading up to the amalgamationist 1960s, trustees at the schools rushed to start building projects, afraid that a bigger, less personal board would ignore their school. The board started life saddled with debt."

So what we are trying to accomplish is not a repeat of history. Perhaps you could give us, in a positive way, if you could, some suggestions as to how you would deal with the situation with boards who do have reserves and are about to be amalgamated, to prevent them from basically wasting money or spending money that might be termed to be irresponsible. How would you do that?

Mr Filo: I can tell, Mr Skarica, that you are a politician, because you're arguing by anecdote rather than by statistics. That's an acceptable way of presenting an argument, but don't argue about the exceptions. Tell me, for example, that in the educational system, 97% of the collective agreements are settled with bitter strikes, for example. Could you tell me that? Or could you tell me that 97% of all the boards do exactly what the Carleton board did?

Whether you're an MPP or whether you're a board or whether you're a professor, or whatever you are, there's a small percentage of people in that particular group or grouping who are going to do things that are not exactly mainstream. To use an anecdotal bit of evidence, as you're using, to wholesale change an education system is a blatant misuse of ordinary research methods. Give me some statistics. Don't give me what one outlaw board may have done, because I'll tell you what one outlaw MPP has done and then put all of you people into disrepute.

The Chair: We thank you very much, Mr Filo. It seems an odd note to end on, but we do thank you for coming and making your presentation and for bringing a great deal of passion to this committee.

Mr Filo: I'm very pleased to have been here, and thanks again.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, we are adjourned until 12 o'clock in Barrie tomorrow.

The committee adjourned at 1901.

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| Mr Bud | Wildman (Algoma ND) |

Substitutions present / Membres remplaçants présents:

| | |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| Mr Ted | Arnott (Wellington PC) |
| Mr Marcel | Beaubien (Lambton PC) |
| Mr Gilles | Bisson (Cochrane South / -Sud ND) |
| Mr John | O'Toole (Durham East / -Est PC) |
| Mr Toni | Skarica (Wentworth North / -Nord PC) |

Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes:

| | |
|------------|---------------------------------|
| Mr Rick | Bartolucci (Sudbury L) |
| Mr Michael | Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin L) |
| Ms Shelley | Martel (Sudbury East / -Est ND) |

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Staff / Personnel: Mr Ted Glenn, research officer, Legislative Research Service

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First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Thursday 20 March 1997

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Jeudi 20 mars 1997

Standing committee on social development

Fewer School
Boards Act, 1997

Comité permanent des affaires sociales

Loi de 1997 réduisant
le nombre de conseils scolaires



Chair: Annamarie Castrilli
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Thursday 20 March 1997

Jeudi 20 mars 1997

The committee met at 1158 in the county of Simcoe administration centre, Midhurst.

FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 RÉDUISANT
LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Consideration of Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / *Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système, en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.*

JACK GARNER

The Vice-Chair (Mr Dwight Duncan): Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. The first delegation today is Mr Jack Garner. You have 10 minutes, sir. That's total time for both your presentation and questions and answers. If you use the whole time up, then we won't be able to ask any questions. Please go ahead.

Mr Jack Garner: Thank you very much. Before I begin my time, though, I apologize. I believed the Chair was going to be chairing today and therefore I said "Madam Chair" in my brief. I plan on using all my time, and thereby I'll avoid having to answer any questions. Having said that, good afternoon and welcome to Simcoe county.

Thank you for allowing me to express my views on Bill 104. I am also very pleased that you are listening to the many various views concerning this bill, because certainly sincere difference of opinion is good.

I am a lifelong citizen of Barrie. I'm a trustee for the Simcoe County Board of Education, and by choice I am a volunteer trustee. I chair the business and finance committee of the board. However, these are my personal views.

As a retired businessman, I look at the governance and funding of public education from a different point of view than some trustees, for as you know, a large number of trustees are present or former board employees.

Our board is a medium-to-large board with a student population of about 50,000, and we have an annual operating budget of about \$300 million.

I agree with the principle of Bill 104. This bill has the potential to return public education governance back to where it came from the school community. That's exactly where it belongs.

A reduction in school boards and trustee numbers will not have any negative effect on student education. Our board has 22 trustees: one native, three French and 18 English. The population of Simcoe county is 330,000. Three MPs and three members of the provincial legislature provide the political governance for these 330,000, and therefore a reduction to even five trustees would, in my opinion, more than adequately fulfil the governance needs for our 50,000 students, especially with expanded community governance.

As a volunteer trustee, I suggest an honorarium cap of \$15,000. My circumstance allows me to spend about 40 hours a week being a trustee. A trustee must be willing to spend a minimum, in my opinion, of three hours a day on board business, and therefore an honorarium of \$15,000 per year is not an unreasonable figure for that dedication.

If the words "or former employee" were added to section (4)(a) of Bill 104, you would then encourage former board employees to seek elected public office in areas other than public education. Presently, all former employees on boards are placed in an embarrassing position at every board meeting. They have an interest conflict every time salary, benefits or employee contract issues are discussed at the table, for their decisions directly affect the Ontario teachers' pension plan, or the OMERS pension plan, of which they are partners.

Our board, with the exception of the metro French board, has the largest number of students in its French-language section of any school board in southern Ontario, approximately 1,000 students. The current system of a French-language section within the structure of school boards is totally unworkable because there are a very small number of students over a very large geographical area. In 1997, less than 1% of Simcoe county taxpayers assessed themselves on the rolls as public French tax supporters.

The present funding because of this economy of scale has created program inequity for English-language students as well as creating an unreasonable increase in tax burden for the English taxpayers. Because of small school enrolment, it will be impossible to fund the new southern Ontario public francophone boards with the same per pupil grants as the English-language students;

there are simply too few students. This will create a major inequity problem for the English-language students.

The educational covenant for French-speaking parents in Ontario under section 23 of the charter must be directly between the Ontario government and French-speaking community. Therefore, would the government consider making its covenant with these communities in exactly the same way that it presently does, very successfully, with the Penetanguishene Protestant Separate School Board? It would be much more manageable and much less costly to administer than the present proposal.

The Education Improvement Commission: Undemocratic? How else could transition be done? Under current legislation boards are not directly accountable to anyone in respect to raising revenue. This is undemocratic.

Everyone concerned about accountability realizes the necessity for an independent body to oversee the transition of existing boards. In a perfect world this would not be necessary. Under these circumstances a body must have maximum legislated flexibility to address all individual needs of every board plus every issue of transition. It must also be able to, if necessary, address any possible lack of responsibility or accountability by any board or trustee during that particular transition period.

The transfer of governance to school councils is the key principle to the future of Ontario public education. The important thing is, who makes up the community school council? Students, parents, principals, vice-principals, teachers, secretaries, custodians and all other interested persons within the school community.

Our public education system will be the best if government and boards were willing to transfer maximum governance to the school community. If we had the courage to strengthen the role of school councils, whereby the school community had maximum opportunity to influence their school through political and economic governance, we would then best serve the needs of our students.

Every Ontario school community is different. Allow them and encourage them to be. Public community schools have the potential and could very well be Ontario's version of public charter schools. They can be publicly funded and they can be community-governed.

As chair of the budget committee, I see that a new formula for public education funding is long overdue. Ontario's changing economy and many other factors make the present local-provincial funding partnership no longer workable. For example, our board today has a 1997 budget shortfall of \$23.5 million between expected revenues and expenditures. For the past four years, the board has successfully completed major expenditure reductions in every budget area with the exception of contracted salaries and benefits. Under the present system, we have no place to go except to the local property taxpayer, and this would result in major tax increases.

The scope of public education in Ontario has changed significantly in the past two decades. Funding changes have not kept pace. Many new mandated programs, such as special education and continuing adult education, are a provincial education responsibility and should be

funded accordingly. The current funding system is flawed. It is failing to fund programs for some of our students, and at the same time it is not fair or equitable when we ask all local property taxpayers to fund the many new, diversified needs of our students.

Simcoe county property taxpayers fund 65.83% of our total operating budget. Municipalities such as Tiny township contribute 76.7% of their total property taxation to education. The county average is 64.2%. In the town of Coldwater the contribution is 68% and the education portion of their property tax has increased 54% since just 1990. We have placed a very large, unfair tax burden on the local property taxpayers, and I can tell you, they are tired of this inequity.

The time has come for education to be funded by Ontario society, not by the antiquated method of residential property taxation. Have you talked to one person outside of the education system who does not agree with provincial funding and the equitable distribution of grants? I haven't.

In summary:

Distribute the economic resources of the province throughout the different school districts on a equal per pupil basis.

The proposed number of boards and trustees as generally recommended by the Sweeney commission will more than adequately fulfil the local political requirements necessary for public education.

If you want to maximize student achievement, then maximize the governance of school councils.

Everybody talks about the need for grassroots participation. Instead of talking the talk, let's walk the walk. Everyone — the student, the parent, the school administration, the school community, the board, the taxpayer, you and I — will all be happy and it will be successful.

Also, please be cautious of the whining, vested-interest hypocrites who profess to be protecting the common good of our students through the status quo. "Slow down," they say. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." It's obvious to everyone that we should watch what they're doing and not what they're saying. It has to be obvious to everyone by their political actions that money and political control are their primary mandates. The educational success or failure of students is secondary, at best, on their agenda. Most people are telling us, "It's broken." Only those with vested interests support the present system.

Ontario is a province of opportunity. The future of our public education is going to be exciting. I would want to be and plan to be a part of it, and I just wish that I were 20 years younger. I thank you, Mr Chair and committee, for your support and time.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you, Mr Garner. We appreciate that.

On a matter of housekeeping, there are two deferred motions that we have left from yesterday. Mrs McLeod. 1210

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I also think it's important, as we begin our hearings here in Simcoe county, to note for the record that while we're in Simcoe, and clearly the Simcoe board is one of those affected in some ways by Bill 104, although not a board that's going

to be amalgamated, this is the only opportunity for those from the areas of Bruce, Grey, Huron, Perth, probably Middlesex-Elgin — they may go to Brantford — Victoria, Haliburton, Muskoka, Durham, York region, probably Wellington-Dufferin and, as we know, east and west Parry Sound, to make representations to our committee. By my count, that's 22 public and separate boards that will be impacted in this area and that I wish had an opportunity to make representation to us today. I want to again express my regret that because of the limited scope and time for our hearings, we will only be able to hear today from eight of those some 22 boards as we attempt to expand the numbers of other affected individuals who want to make representation.

The Vice-Chair: The deferred business from yesterday. There were two motions: Mrs McLeod's and Mr Wildman's. Mr Wildman, I believe we'll deal with your motion later in the day. Mrs McLeod, you had indicated —

Mrs McLeod: Mine can be deferred until we have any further indication that we might have some postponement of having clause-by-clause, which is the substance of my motion, to have some time between the end of the hearings and the actual beginning of the clause-by-clause amendment process.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): In that regard, I've been in touch with my staff in Toronto and Barney Savage is contacting the government House leader and the Liberal House leader to talk about what accommodation might be made. It is possible, if the committee wished to do this, that we could have an additional meeting, if we could find time to do that, which would not be counted as part of the actual business on Bill 104, because what we were talking about discussing would be recommendations around the implementation and boundaries, rather than what is in the bill. It's possible we might be able to do it that way.

The Vice-Chair: Perhaps we could ask the subcommittee to meet informally at break, because we have a large number of delegations to deal with today. I think we'll do that.

Mr Wildman: Mr Chair, if I could raise one other matter, I've spoken to Mr Skarica, and Mrs McLeod has talked to me about this as well. I understand that support staff employees represented by CUPE are not on the list. I was wondering if we could add them to the list, either if there's a cancellation or at the end, so it would mean an extra 10 or 15 minutes for the committee, if that's acceptable.

The Vice-Chair: I would accept that. I don't know if I have the jurisdiction to accept that or if that would require a motion. It would need unanimous consent, I am told by the clerk.

Mr Wildman: So the question is whether or not we want to allow the time for the support staff representatives.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): Sure, unanimous consent.

The Vice-Chair: There's unanimous consent. The CUPE delegation will be added at the end of the day.

Mr Wildman: Thank you.

CUNDLES HEIGHTS SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the parent council from Cundles Heights School, Al Thompson. Mr Thompson, you have 15 minutes. Use the time as you see fit.

Mr Al Thompson: Thank you for inviting me to make this presentation. My name is Al Thompson and I'm chair of the Cundles Heights School Parent Council, and according to Mr Garner's criteria, I suppose I'm a whining hypocrite.

Last evening, our council held an information session on Bill 104. It was rather lively. I'm here today to voice the concerns of our school council and therefore the Cundles school community. We have four major concerns regarding Bill 104. They are tax realignment, the powers of the Education Improvement Commission, amalgamation, and credibility and communication of the ministry.

Tax realignment: Bill 104 proposes to change funding from local residential taxation to funding education from general funds. At the moment, my school board must raise local taxes to increase revenue. In this case, they're immediately accountable to me, and I take exception to Mr Garner's comment that they're not accountable; they are accountable. We vote them into office and therefore they are as much accountable as the ministry is. They're immediately accountable.

After Bill 104 there will be no guarantee at all that the same amount now being spent on education in Simcoe county will still be available and will still flow into Simcoe county for education. We have no control over that. The only guarantee we have is the minister's word, and I take exception to that because this is a minister who has vowed to create chaos in our system.

Where does the money come from? We suggest, as local taxpayers, that you leave taxation alone, to the locally elected officials, where accountability is easier to come by for me and for other parents.

I suppose our biggest fear and our biggest concern, certainly mine, are the powers of the Education Improvement Commission. Bill 104 proposes to set up an unelected Education Improvement Commission with sweeping powers over duly elected trustees. This is not only undemocratic, but in our minds it is obscenely insulting to the people of Ontario. The unelected commission may overrule any decision of a democratically elected school board. We as trustees, parents, have absolutely no avenue of appeal. In fact, school boards can be fined. This commission, as you know, has the power to levy fines against elected trustees. This is obscene.

Bill 104 proposes that this commission will have local representation. Where do they come from? Will they be elected? If not, who will appoint them? The commission? The government? Will they be party faithful who are being perhaps rewarded for some past deed? What will their personal agenda be? Will they have experience? Will they be businessmen? Will they have experience in education? Will they be paid? How much will they be paid?

We believe that the setting up of this commission will lead to the creation of another bureaucracy, the cost of

which will far outstrip any savings generated by amalgamation or the reduction of trustees' salaries.

We understand that a system was required to control the greed of some Toronto trustees who made a grab for extra retirement funds, shall we say. My very important question at this point is, was Ann Vanstone one of those? However, I'm sure, and we're sure, that something much less draconian could have been found to control this grab for extra money. It's our suggestion as a group that this commission's power be greatly curtailed and that its role, if any, be limited to an advisory one.

We feel strongly that we as a school community have been well served by our school board, and with the cooperation of local school parent councils we can still be. Please, we urge you to reconsider this awesome, undemocratic power you propose to unleash upon our education system.

Amalgamation: Initially amalgamation made sense to me, and in some cases it still makes sense. I happen to work in the education field. I deal with school boards right across the country. I have seen tremendous changes in the way school boards spend their money in the last few years. For example, the Ottawa school board and the Carleton school board, both Roman Catholic school boards, buy their products through one central buying group. All of their material is shipped to one central location. They have amalgamated all of these resource requirements and therefore they have saved their boards a tremendous amount of money. This is happening right across Ontario. To me, there is no major reason now for amalgamation.

I do, however, have a problem with school boards that build Taj Mahals and spend extra money doing that sort of thing. For example, I deal with the Dufferin-Peel school board and the Peel school board, and both of them have huge, half-empty buildings sitting on Matheson Boulevard and Highway 10. I resent this, but I believe this can be controlled locally.

All of the things that are taking place in amalgamation, such as boards going together, have not been thoroughly thought out by the ministry. There are many unanswered questions. I ask the obvious question: If two school federations in two separate communities or two separate boards have different contracts, how is that going to be resolved? Has anybody thought about it yet, seriously thought about it? This could create all kinds of chaos, and it will impact on our students. That's why we're all here: students.

1220

We had a great number of problems with the credibility and the communication of the ministry regarding these hearings. Perhaps I should reverse that; poor communication causes a lack of credibility. I personally polled 18 school councils in the Barrie area over the last week; 80% of them did not know anything about Bill 104, and 90% of them had no idea this hearing was taking place. Gentlemen, that's your fault. I didn't know this hearing was taking place until a week ago. Someone else called me to tell me about it. Is this an oversight or was it deliberate? Do you really want to keep this low-key so that nobody comes?

The perception out there in the general public is that you have a credibility problem. The process of choosing presenters: I to this moment do not have any idea how I was chosen to be here, none whatsoever. Should it have been a lottery rather than a partisan choice? Again, you have a perception of credibility, poor credibility.

The whole education system at this point is chaotic. Nobody knows what's going on; I don't even believe the ministry knows. Minister Snobelen's and the Premier's statements change from day to day, perhaps hour to hour. I've heard that trustees' salaries will be \$5,000. I heard the other day that perhaps this is \$15,000 and nobody in the ministry ever said anything about \$5,000. There was a report in the *Globe and Mail* the other day that it would be \$5,000. I saw nothing from the government countering that.

Minister Snobelen vowed to create chaos. It's our belief that he has succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. We as a school community believe that all of this chaos is causing untold harm to our teachers and to our children. Please, gentlemen, take time to rethink Bill 104. Make sure that all the ramifications have been thoroughly examined. What's the rush? What's the agenda? A better education system or a tax cut at the expense of our children?

In conclusion, we as a community realize that this government was elected with a mandate to reduce the deficit, and we all agree it should be reduced, that we cannot continue to live on borrowed money. We realize too that changes have to be made to the education system, but surely they can be made in a fair, compassionate and just manner. We fail to see any of these qualities in Bill 104. We urge you as a committee to recommend changes to this bill based on the issues that we and others have raised and will raise today and at other times. We strongly urge you to recommend to the ministry that they slow down and take a closer look at all the proposals being made. We ask you to keep in mind that this is not about parents, it's not about trustees, it's not about the minister, it's not about the commission; it's about my children. Bill 104 does not and the ministry has not produced any evidence that the proposed changes will enhance the education of our children.

Applause.

The Vice-Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, we do not permit demonstrations in the audience. We'd ask you to refrain from applauding or responding to the delegations.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I was interested in your comment as a representative of a parent school council that you want local, accountable trustees. We just heard from a trustee who said: "Put it all down to parent councils. Make parent councils more responsible. Give them the power and authority." Yet virtually every parent council representative who has come forward has said: "These are unwanted decisions being foisted on us. The elected board will become simply a powerless buffer between us and the decision-makers in the bureaucracy." Could you tell me why you're opposed to the decision-making coming down to the parent council level?

Mr Thompson: Because basically we're just replacing one decision-making body with another. At the moment,

the trustees are accountable to us as parents. First of all, parent councils will not be ready and will not be mature enough for two to three or perhaps four years to be able to handle this sort of responsibility, and therefore most of them do not want it.

However, the accountability factor is very important as well, because at this moment trustees can be voted out of office. At this moment, most parent councils in Ontario have been acclaimed rather than voted in. There is such apathy in the school parent community that this will not help in any way at all. So you have a group of people who will be there forever, a group of people perhaps with personal agendas that are not in the best interests of the children and the school community.

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): Thank you very much, and thank you for your presentation as well. I want to follow up a little bit on Ms Lankin's line of questioning. Firstly, I'd be interested to know the level of comfort you would have in an advisory capacity in terms of the type of decision you would be willing to make. Secondly, the bill itself speaks to the feasibility of increased parental involvement in school governance. From your perspective, what feasibility test do you believe the EIC should be evaluating in terms of that evaluation process?

Mr Thompson: I think it's very simple. I think it's maturity. We in Simcoe county have parent council chairmen networking evenings almost every six weeks, and I am absolutely staggered at how many of the council chairs are still groping their way, who still do not understand why they're there and what they're doing. This is quite scary to me, because if all of this responsibility is all of a sudden put on all these people, it's going to destroy the school system, destroy the education system. They're not ready. The other problem that I have, again, is election and accountability. The trustees at the moment are accountable to me; the school councils are not.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much, Mr Thompson. Although we haven't met before, I feel as though we have now put ourselves both in the same boat, because I'm another of those whining hypocrites, as defined by Mr Garner, having spend a lot of my last 30 years as an advocate for public education, so I appreciate your being here today.

Mr Wildman: I don't think you're whining.

Mrs McLeod: Just wait. I appreciate your being here, and I think it's important for you to know that we've tried to have as many parent council representations as possible, and they have universally both expressed the value of the work they now do on parent councils and their concerns with Bill 104, so I think the research into feasibility in strengthened roles is being done by this committee.

You touched on a number of things, and I only have time to deal with one. You have indicated that one concern is that there's no guarantee of funding being maintained with the companion piece of the government taking over 100% of funding. It appears today that in fact some \$2 billion of funding for education support may be shifted to the municipalities and potentially under the control of municipal councils, so that school custodians, secretaries and school busing would be under a different employer. You've touched on the chaos of harmonization

of contracts. I wonder if you would comment on the additional chaos and disruption in the school community that this move might bring.

Mr Thompson: The only comment I could make is that this would increase the chaos. I have no difficulty at all in privatizing some of the services that schools have. I have no difficulty with that, providing it's done in a proper manner and providing those who presently work for the school are protected. I'm concerned that if these things are all of a sudden thrown into the mix at this particular point, without being well thought out, and this is why I asked the commission to ask the government to slow down and think about all these things, the chaos will be unprecedented.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much, sir. I wish we had more time.

1230

DAN HEFFERNAN

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is Dan Heffernan and Cathy Simpson.

Ms Lankin: As the next presenters are coming forward, Mr Chair, I just wanted to table something with the committee, and I'd ask that the clerk distribute copies of that to the other members of the committee. It's a question that I'd like to put. It reads as follows: "Please design a sandbox cover that has an area of 12m². The cover is to be flat and rectangular with a length and width that are whole numbers." In case anyone wonders what kind of question this is, this actually comes from the government's new standardized testing for grade 3 in math, and I would like to suggest that the members of the government caucus perhaps should be given five minutes to try to answer this question, and we can have an assessment of the education system.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you, Ms Lankin. I will not impose that, because I probably couldn't answer it myself. We have a delegation. Mr Heffernan and Cathy Simpson, please begin. You have 10 minutes. You can use that entirely to speak or you can leave some time for questions and answers.

Mr Dan Heffernan: Just to clarify, Cathy Simpson couldn't be here today. She works for the district health council here in Barrie and she's been tied up in another meeting, so my wife has come with me to hold my hand as I make this presentation to you.

I titled the presentation you have before you *Educating Our Future — Youth Today are the Adults Tomorrow*. What's in this for you and me? I believe it's our future. That's what we have at stake. This is our future. How we educate our children will directly affect each one of us. People who do not agree with paying for education because they do not have children or their children are grown up need only to look at what is going on today around each of us to understand. Are we not the future children from yesterday who were receiving our education 20 and 30 years ago?

I came here today to talk to you about the changes proposed to the education system through Bill 104, but there are many more issues to be discussed that are beyond the scope of this bill. This bill is called the Fewer

School Boards Act. It is only a piece of the puzzle. It's difficult to know if one agrees with all these changes or not until we see the whole picture.

I am not afraid of change. I welcome change where it is needed. To give you an example, until I started Grade 7, I attended a one-room country school house where all eight grades sat in one room, taught by one teacher. Although I sometimes remember it very fondly, we should never return to that level of education. It served us well at the time. However, times change and so does the education system to keep up.

At the opposite end of that spectrum, I was able to prepare for this hearing today and keep up with the current changes in the education system through the Internet. I have with me today news releases, maps of the new boundaries of the district school boards, back-grounder notes and the speaking notes of Minister John Snobelen before the Legislature announcing the education restructuring, all downloaded from the government's Web page on the Internet. As I said, times change; and if you do not change with those times, then you fall behind.

What we should be concerned about as parents, trustees, legislators and business people is how the education system is going to prepare our children for the future. I guess I look at this whole thing much differently. I want to know that my two sons will have the skills and the knowledge base necessary after their school years to succeed in the world and do whatever they choose to do. That may be any profession from doctoring to nursing, carpentry or computer programming. Whatever it is, this is the product I believe I am purchasing now through the education system, and if it is not, then I want to fix it so that is what I am buying.

Bill 104 simply asks me to buy a pig in a poke. It's another way of saying: "Here are a bunch of changes. This is a very small piece of the puzzle, but trust us; the rest of the puzzle will fall into place if you accept these reforms." This may be a true statement, but I don't have that much faith when it comes to decisions being made by humans, let alone politicians.

I get uneasy when I see conflicting statements being made by the Minister of Education and the literature coming out of his ministry. As I said, I downloaded some stuff from the Internet. In the speaking notes I have with me today, the minister is quoted as saying that more than 80 cents on every dollar spent on education is spent outside the classroom. He said he was quoting from the Report on School Board Spending 1995-96. Thanks to the Internet, I downloaded that report prepared by Ernst and Young, and I found that the report stated that moneys being spent outside the classroom varied from 46.1 cents to 32.9 cents. I find it difficult to understand how the minister could be that far out on his figures. If he was working from the figures that Ernst and Young produced, would he still have proposed the same reforms?

In any event, I take exception with a report like this which separates out necessary support services such as guidance, library, secretaries, principals and custodial duties as being outside the classroom, not being value added to the classroom. For example, the work the janitor does cleaning up the cafeteria between lunch periods and cleaning and taking out the garbage from the classrooms,

halls and washrooms is an important part of the safe and healthy environment the student needs to study and learn. Likewise, the preparation time the teacher needs is as important to the teaching that goes on inside the classroom as the actual teaching is.

At first glance, I would say that I agree with the concept of amalgamating school boards. I want to move carefully forward. In agreeing to this, I am agreeing to doing away with the local representation I now have, to be replaced by an Education Improvement Commission whose decisions, as I understand, are final and cannot be reviewed or questioned, even by a court.

Throughout the information I downloaded from the government's Web page, there are other documents referred to which have a significant bearing on how the education reforms as a whole will transpire. One such document is titled Meeting Students' Needs. This is a document which questions the way we have funded education in the past and how we should fund it in the future, but it does not give specific, concrete ideas or a funding model which we can discuss.

I have to agree that the way we do funding is obsolete and unfair. The Catholic school board, of which I am a supporter, gets less money per student to spend than the public board simply because of the tax base which supports those two boards. It is not fair that a student being educated in the Catholic school board has less money available for their education than their friend who is attending the public school board.

The students coming out of the education system and entering the business or industrial world or continuing on to a college or university education will be expected to compete on par, regardless of the school board system they were taught in.

Throughout the documentation there are references to lowering the cost of education and improving the quality of education. These two issues are not synonymous. In fact, one could argue that they are opposites. I believe they are different issues, to be dealt with not independently of each other but in conjunction with each other, with the priority being placed on quality of education.

The introduction of advisory councils in each school is good. I am proud to have been elected to the parents' advisory council at St Peter's, our new Catholic high school here in Barrie. However, I have to admit that parents are not necessarily the best people to set the education curriculum. That is where I believe we should have a stronger partnership role with the business community, the industrial world and the end users of our education system. It is difficult to see down the road if you are not on the road.

I see this partnership taking on two functions: first, where the partners in education advise the educators what the needs will be in the future; and second, where they can help facilitate the process of education through cooperative programs or apprenticeship programs.

Apprenticeship programs are almost obsolete today as compared to 20 years ago when I was going through my apprenticeship. There need to be incentives to industry and business to enter into the education field through apprenticeships. This form of education is self-funding. The apprentice works at wages which are prorated to

their advancement in the program, and the company or business gets work done at the same time as receiving a credit towards their education taxes.

This would have to be monitored by the education system to ensure there was not abuse. We would have to be convinced that each program offered by an industry or business was one which benefited the student and society as a whole and was not being used as a form of cheap labour.

I have a number of questions, though. How will the funding be allocated to the schools in the new district boards? Will it be based on the number of supporters in those school boards like it is now, or will the funding be pooled so that the money spent per student in each school within a district school board's jurisdiction will be equal and fair?

In the explanatory notes accompanying Bill 104, there is a definition of what a separate school board supporter in 1997 is. What about the future? How will the individuals indicate their support for either the separate or the public school without their taxes being directed in either direction? What about business taxes? Are these to be pooled, or do they direct their taxes either to the public or separate school within those jurisdictions? What will happen to the land and the buildings now owned by the ratepayers of the existing school boards? Will the province expropriate these into their ownership, or will the new district school boards assume ownership of these?

In conclusion, where does all this take us? The government should table all the reforms it is proposing, including the formula for funding. I want to be convinced that the level of education is not going to be eroded by taking money out of the education system. If the government can show us that it can produce as high- or higher-quality a product at less cost, then show it to us before asking us to accept these changes. If you were a business and you were trying to sell your product to a consumer who already had a supplier, that is the least you would be asked to do before they would agree to buy your product over the other.

I propose that the government leave these reforms on the table, table the rest of the agenda and then give us an opportunity to debate and discuss the whole package. As a parent, I want the best possible education for my children; and as someone who will get old some day, I want to be sure I am leaving the controls to a generation that is more competent than we were.

Thank you for this opportunity. I hope my suggestions were relevant and helpful.

Applause.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you, Mr Heffernan. I'm going to ask once again, there are to be no demonstrations in the audience.

I have two notes to the committee. First of all, we had a cancellation at 6:45 today. My understanding is that CUPE has agreed to do their presentation at 6:45.

I noted as you came in that a number of you have signs. The rules of the Legislature do not permit the display of signs in the House or in committee. I would ask that you put them behind your chairs and leave them off. Thank you very much.

The time for questions is up, Mrs McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: I know, though it's unfortunate, because it was a very fine presentation. But I want to place one question to the parliamentary assistant. A number of the questions in Mr Heffernan's brief have been placed by committee members for response by the ministry, but there is one very important one that I can't quite believe we've failed to place at this point, and that's question 2, the definition of a separate school board supporter. It is quite clear that the act says what a separate school supporter in 1997 is, but Mr Heffernan's question is, what about the future? I would like to table that as a question for response from the parliamentary assistant.

Mr Wildman: Following from that is also Mr Heffernan's question with regard to commercial-industrial assessment, which of course is going to continue to be collected and paid towards education. Will businesses be able to direct their taxes to one system or the other, or will it be pooled? I think these are significant questions that need to be answered and I agree with Mr Heffernan's position that we really shouldn't be moving forward on this until we know what's going to happen with these funding questions.

The Vice-Chair: The questions are noted and placed and the parliamentary assistant — Mr O'Toole, did you have a question?

Mr O'Toole: Yes, whether there is time to ask the deputation a question. We're here to listen to them and that's very important to me.

The Vice-Chair: Yes, I understand. There is no time left for questions. I apologize.

1240

DUFFERIN-PEEL ROMAN CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the Dufferin-Peel Roman Catholic Separate School Board, Terry Miller and Patrick Meany, chair.

Mr Patrick Meany: May I correct the names? I am Patrick Meany, but I have with me our director of education and associate director. The director is Mike Bator and the associate director of corporate services is Peter Howarth.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you, sir. You have 15 minutes. You can use the whole time for your presentation or you can leave time for questions.

Mr Meany: I'll do the best I can. My name is Patrick Meany and I am the chairman of the Dufferin-Peel Roman Catholic Separate School Board. The Dufferin-Peel Catholic school board has nearly 6,000 full-time and 700 part-time employees who serve some 78,000 students in 93 elementary and 18 secondary schools. We are one of the largest and fastest-growing educational systems in Canada, serving a wide range of students with a variety of educational needs and from many cultural and linguistic backgrounds. We believe that what we are putting before you today is important in understanding how Bill 104 impacts on all school boards, but in a special way how it impacts on the Catholic communities we represent. We have copies of our full brief, which we provide to the committee, as well as this presentation paper.

Bill 104 does not give the specifics of how the legislation will work and the regulations are yet to be published.

We need to receive the regulations as soon as possible in order to meet the obvious time constraints.

We believe this bill represents a systemic change that, without suitable guarantees, would alter Catholic education in Ontario, and you'll note that I underline the words "without suitable guarantees." As everyone agrees, the needs of students are of paramount importance in any educational change. Bill 104 must be amended to reflect this fact.

Catholic education is an integral part of the education fabric of Ontario and has been since the mid-1850s. Catholics have always sought their fair share of the education tax dollar while maintaining the distinct nature of our schools. While the Scott Act of 1863 set the foundation for a publicly funded Catholic school system, subsequent acts provided Catholics with limited financial ability to direct their own system within the provincial publicly funded system.

The board, with cautious optimism, welcomes the intent of the bill, as expressed frequently by the Minister of Education and Training, to provide equity in funding for all children, with appropriate allowances for special circumstances, and urges the government to include controls in Bill 104 to ensure that this truly occurs and is maintained.

Part of the success of our board has been due to a cooperative partnership among the church, parents, students, ratepayers, teachers and trustees. This partnership has ensured that the standard of Catholic education in Dufferin-Peel has risen consistently and substantially over the past 27 years. This is evident in the day-to-day interplay of the religious, academic, social, athletic and cultural activities of our children.

As a board, we see change as an evolution of growth. To this end, we have been recognized provincially, even nationally — and I understand even internationally — as a leader in innovative educational change. Dufferin-Peel has pioneered systemic and specific developments in curricula and administration since our inception in 1969. Most important, we believe our commitment to graduating people of formed conscience, based on objective standards and the teachings of Jesus Christ, constitutes a significant contribution to society.

Bill 104 would change the fundamental nature of the board's relationship with its partners if it were to cancel its taxation power, thus removing the mechanism that keeps Catholic education free from arbitrary interference by the government. But constitutionally, it cannot do that.

The Catholic communities of Peel region and Dufferin county have relied on the board to develop and encourage a Catholic approach to education. Over the years, members of those communities made personal sacrifices so that Catholic education could prosper and develop in Dufferin-Peel. That commitment to Catholic training and grounding in the fundamentals of the Catholic faith created a tight bond among schools, the elected representatives and the parish communities.

We believe Bill 104 circumvents the traditional Canadian ideals of local control and local democratic representation. Both of these ideals are set-pieces of historic Catholic educational development in Ontario. Bill 104 proposes tax control by the provincial government,

while replacing equitable local representation with a weakened board.

The bill appears to challenge the guarantees of denominational rights in the British North America Act, 1867, subsections 93(1) through (4). The board contends that the bill proposes to withdraw its right to tax, a right enjoyed under the Constitution of Canada and continually exercised to this point. The board emphatically states that its right to tax must be upheld in order that it may continue to control governance of and access to its schools.

The bill makes only an oblique reference to Roman Catholic separate school boards in the documentation which accompanied its presentation. This board firmly believes that designation as "Roman Catholic," which Catholic boards have enjoyed before and since Confederation, must be restored and its mandate reinforced in Bill 104.

Bill 104 changes the size and nature of boards of trustees. The board supports a reasonable reduction in the number of trustees and would support the concept of the province setting a reasonable rate of remuneration for school board trustees in keeping with the rate scale of other elected officials.

Bill 104 limits who is eligible for election to the new district boards by excluding all those who either work for a school board or whose spouses are employed by a school board, unless they take a leave of absence from their jobs. The board would support these eligibility restrictions, provided similar restrictions were applied to all elected municipal and provincial officials. We note that the electorate has traditionally dealt with those situations through the electoral process.

The board endorses and supports the establishment of 11 French-language school boards in Ontario. It has had a long and rewarding relationship with its French-language section, but believes this is a timely occasion for French-language electors to have their own school boards. The board applauds the fact that Bill 104 recognizes and affirms the constitutional rights of francophones.

The board's Dufferin schools and the Catholic community in Dufferin county have been integral parts of the Dufferin-Peel system since 1969. The board would deeply regret, and in fact is strongly opposed to, the possible loss of these schools and supporters. The proposed realignment of Dufferin county schools would divide the schools and the local parish along diocesan lines. Further, there is no evidence that the realignment would result in any demonstrable savings for either board. Therefore, the board would not agree with the separation of the Dufferin schools from its jurisdiction.

Bill 104 creates a number of financial prohibitions in contracts. The December 31, 1997, restriction affects contracts which must be settled, for example, in transportation and capital projects. Clarity on these issues must be provided as soon as possible.

The board opposes the wide powers assigned to the Education Improvement Commission and its committees. The EIC's mandate is so broadly encompassing that it dilutes the effectiveness of the duly elected representatives of the people and would allow the commission to usurp the board's legitimate elected authority.

1250

As proposed by Bill 104, the French-language section will be part of a new French-language separate district board, and two schools in Dufferin county would be assigned to the Wellington County Roman Catholic Separate School Board.

The board therefore faces two sets of issues related to the division of assets and liabilities (1) between its English and French-language sections, and (2) between its Peel region and Dufferin county components.

The necessary concurrent negotiations would be difficult to manage. Bill 104 does not appear to address this issue. The board requests that the government provide regulations to set out the process to be used and the basis of local negotiations. This is especially critical with respect to the creation of the French-language boards, as local negotiations, including those related to capital debt, may lead to further negotiations at the regional level when the various French-language sections come together to form one school board.

The bill does not address the status of personnel, the status of contract negotiations, the transfer of staff members and the outsourcing of non-instructional services, nor how availability of equitable funding for the new French-language boards will be ensured.

This board has been granted 11 allocations for schools, of which two would no longer be within the board's jurisdiction. These are for a new elementary school in Orangeville and an addition to Ste-Jeanne d'Arc Elementary School.

In the event that severance should occur, the board requires clarification whether it or the new boards should calendarize and proceed with construction of these facilities.

It is unclear whether students in existing schools would be required to transfer schools as a result of reorganization. There are secondary school students from the Dufferin area who attend Robert F. Hall Secondary School in Caledon in Peel Region, and students from Caledon attending St Peter Elementary School in Orangeville, which is in Dufferin county. Clarification is required.

In conclusion, many areas in the bill impact on the operation of this board. The board agrees with some of the changes, while others require clarification before any conclusions can be drawn. Further, the board is concerned about the practical considerations arising from the need to manage the provisions of Bill 104 without knowing how the regulations will affect the day-to-day activities of the new Peel district Roman Catholic separate school board. Our full text is part of our presentation and lists our complete concerns.

The issues of taxation and local representation raise obvious questions about the constitutional rights of Catholics. Should the bill, when passed, infringe upon these rights, the Dufferin-Peel Roman Catholic Separate School Board is prepared to take the appropriate legal action necessary to defend and maintain our Catholic education system. Thank you for hearing us.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Mr Meany, for your presentation and your diligence here. I have just a couple of questions. Under "equity," you cautiously mention, "The

board welcomes the intent of the bill, as expressed frequently by the minister...to provide equity in funding." I thought the struggle in the last couple of decades in the separate school system has been about equity.

Mr Meany: Yes, it has been.

Mr O'Toole: Do you think this addresses that issue or not?

Mr Meany: I think it would address it completely if it built into the legislation the insurance and assurance that the intent comes into reality.

Mr O'Toole: Do you think the four constitutional groups are adequately defined in Bill 104?

Mr Meany: The four constitutional — oh, you mean the French and English?

Mr O'Toole: Bill 104 defines very clearly and quite specifically the four constitutional groups that will be entitled to funding. Are you satisfied that those definitions — you suggested in a couple of places in the report that they weren't clearly defined, that the separate school system wasn't clearly — I beg to differ.

Mr Meany: I wasn't suggesting that. Using the words "Roman Catholic," by putting the words in: We feel it isn't sufficiently in there, and that's a dilution of the recognition that we are a separate, legitimate body.

Mr O'Toole: Maybe you should read Bill 104.

The Vice-Chair: The time for the Conservative caucus to ask questions is up. Perhaps the two of you can discuss that issue at the side.

Mr Meany: Excuse me —

The Vice-Chair: Mr Meany, I apologize. Our time is very limited. Perhaps Mrs McLeod or one of the other —

Mr Meany: I merely want to suggest that there was a remark made that we hadn't read Bill 104.

Mr O'Toole: No, I'm saying it's clear in Bill 104.

The Vice-Chair: Could I please ask everyone to come to order.

Mrs McLeod: Believe me, Mr Meany, if there's anybody who has read Bill 104, it's going to be you. I know that full well. I'm sorry Mr O'Toole didn't allow you to complete the answer to his first question. I think he may have been concerned that you were about to express a concern that many of us have, that equity funding may be at much lower levels than is really adequate to meet the needs of students since we have no guarantees of funding built into this bill.

I'm going to leave that for a moment, because there is another area in which I'm anxious to have you be a little bit more explicit. The reshaping of the boundaries for this board is inexplicable to me, and I want you to expand upon that a little bit. You touched on the split-off of Dufferin; the lack of contiguity between the separate board in the Simcoe area with the public board. It has just become bizarre. There's a part of Muskoka that gets attached to Victoria-Haliburton in the public board, where it's attached to Simcoe with the separate board. Do you have any sense of why this has developed this way?

Mr Meany: No. I remember that when the Queen's University professor who recommended these alignments did so and they were accepted by the then government, the idea of putting Dufferin with us was because we were an urbanized and developing urban area which would be well able to look after a less urbanized one. It's working

out that way. We've had several delegations from up there, from the people who all of a sudden are very fond of us, and they don't want to leave us.

Mr Wildman: I have a question for Mr Meany — I appreciate your presentation — and then I have a question for the parliamentary assistant. Could you expand on the problem that I think follows from Mrs McLeod's questioning but also is more specific to the problem you have in determining board assets and who builds the new construction. What's your problem? The minister has said boards shouldn't be concerned, that they should just proceed with the capital construction projects for which they've gotten approval, so what's your difficulty related to these new boundaries?

Mr Meany: I'll suggest that Mr Howarth address that.

Mr Peter Howarth: Essentially, the ministry has not approved our calendarization of those projects, so we cannot proceed. We have to build them all by March 1999. We have to go out for tender now, so we have tremendous problems around those time lines. Furthermore with that particular issue, if we start to build that now, will the local share be assigned to our ratepayers? Will it be assigned to Wellington? We need some decisions very, very soon about that jurisdictional issue.

The Vice-Chair: I thank the delegation very much for your attendance today and we welcome your input.

Mr Wildman: Following from Mr Meany's presentation, could we get some clarification from the ministry with regard to the change in boundaries vis-à-vis Dufferin and Peel, and also some clarification with regard to which ratepayers will be responsible for the construction projects the board has on stream?

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): As far as the boundaries are concerned, you have the map which shows the boundaries that the ministry intends to implement with the passing of Bill 104. I'm not sure whether you're —

Mr Wildman: Well, the other question I have is that if this existing board proceeds with the construction, they have to go to tender right now. The question is, if the boundaries are going to be different, which ratepayers are going to be paying for this?

The Vice-Chair: That question will be recorded and we'll ask the government to respond to it.

Mrs McLeod: A further expansion on the question Mr Wildman has placed: I would like not just some clarity from the ministry on the boundaries but an explanation of why these boundaries were developed in the way in which they were developed.

Mr Skarica: I think Mr Wildman has asked a similar question.

Mr Wildman: Can I raise a point of order, Mr Chair?

The Vice-Chair: Yes, certainly.

Mr Wildman: I don't want to be troublesome here, but on our list we have scheduled at 1:20 the Metro Toronto French-language school board, and I note that unlike Ottawa, Thunder Bay and Sudbury, the committee does not have with us translation services, and all of us on the committee are not as bilingual as you are, Chair. I'm wondering if it's going to be possible for the French board to make presentation to this committee in the other official language.

The Vice-Chair: We'll deal with that when they come up, but my inclination, and we've done some checking, is that they can present in either French or English. We will arrange translation. I truly regret that there's not translation service here. As committee Chair, I will ask that any presentation be translated, and the delegation, as I understand it, has agreed to that.

1300

BANTING MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL COUNCIL

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is Dana Wright, from Banting Memorial High School. Welcome. You have 15 minutes, which you can use as you see fit, either all for your presentation or you can leave time for questions.

Mrs Wendy MacFarlane: Thank you very much. First of all, I should clarify that Mrs Wright is unable to be here. My name is Mrs Wendy MacFarlane. I am a member of the parent council for Banting Memorial High School for the Cookstown area. I'm pleased to have with me today Toni Worsley, who is also a parent representative, from the Adjala-Toronto area, for Banting. And we're very pleased to have two of our students with us today: Shelly Tulloch, our student council representative; and Lee-Ann Pendleton, who is a grade 12 student who was specifically elected from the school group as the student representative for our school council. We're very pleased to have these two young ladies with us.

Thank you very much. Just as an overview, Banting Memorial has a student population of 1,840 students. It serves an area that is both rural and urban populations. It is a catchment area for 19 schools, feeder schools, that is. There's an extensive bilingual culture, as a large segment of the students come from families based at CFB Borden. That's just to give you an overview. Now I am pleased to begin our presentation. It's brief but sincere.

Bill 104 and the establishment of Education Improvement Commission: No one disputes the need to always look for ways "to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system." However, we the members of the Banting Memorial school council take exception to the amendments Bill 104 will make to the Education Act. We specifically cite:

(a) the reduction of the number of locally elected trustees;

(b) the reduction of district accessibility by, and accountability to, the regional taxpaying public; and

(c) the establishment of a politically appointed Education Improvement Commission whose decisions cannot be challenged.

Bill 104, by reducing the number of locally elected school board trustees by half, effectively reduces the input and accessibility of the local citizenry, ie parents, to their representatives of choice. The politically mandated reduction of the number of Simcoe County Board of Education trustees means less participation for the local citizens.

Ms Shelly Tulloch: Our concerns relating to this are:

(a) Our locally elected trustees will not be able to exercise much independence. They will be there solely to carry out the Queen's Park mandate.

(b) Our locally elected trustees will be left with few responsibilities and an ill-defined role.

Simcoe county's issues throughout this vast geographic area require local perspectives by regionally elected trustees. By reducing the number of trustees you will increase the area of representation for the continuing trustees, thereby increasing their workload and, by dint of time and energy, reducing their accessibility and effectiveness to adequately represent local issues and concerns such as transportation safety.

Ms Lee-Ann Pendleton: We are concerned that the remuneration cap of \$5,000 could significantly reduce the importance and effectiveness of the role of the trustee. We are concerned that the government's proposed \$5,000 cap indicates that they are intending to reduce the role of the elected trustee to political insignificance.

The political appointment of the Education Improvement Commission of five to seven members is unacceptable. Is there not a more democratic way of establishing this commission? Local elections for county trustees are held in November 1997, yet the commission is mandated past the time of legal elections, therefore superseding the power of democratically elected officials. Surely this is not an example of responsible government.

Ms Toni Worsley: Who will the members of this powerful commission be? What are their backgrounds? What do they personally know of Simcoe county and the unique challenges in education that we encounter in this area? Seven people certainly cannot be expected to make responsible, informed decisions for our diverse boards across the province. Appointment of this commission eliminates parental input, accessibility and control of the educational process. We understand that the school councils will be given increased responsibilities, but this government has yet to outline what the role of those groups will be.

We are concerned that this commission is immune to judicial review. Why has this powerful body been set above the law? What checks are there on the commission's power? We, the school council, are concerned that this commission is exempt from petitions through the freedom of information act. Why have citizens been denied this avenue of access to the process of massive change to our educational system? Is this democratic? Is this common sense?

The Vice-Chair: Thank you. We have approximately — this is more time than we've had in a while — three and a third minutes for each caucus. We'll begin with the official opposition.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much. You don't know what a luxury it is to have some time to ask questions of our presenters. I want to note the important emphasis you place on the powers of the EIC. I think the answer to the questions you've raised is that in this legislation there are no checks on the power of the EIC, that they are above the law. A number of presenters have said this is a total violation of anything democratic, that any body should be above the law.

We're also extremely concerned, as you've noted, that the time lines for the election of November 1997 make it impossible for there to be an orderly transition to these new amalgamated boards. There are significant issues to be dealt with for many boards where there are different

contracts coming together, which I realize is not as true in Simcoe county. The EIC has powers that extend for four years, so I think its powers will be essentially absolute in dealing with the chaos that will come.

The issue I'd like to raise with you that comes from your brief is that at the very beginning you talk about your concern about the lack of access to locally elected trustees, and you also indicate that the lack of funding accountability and the lack of taxation power, both those things together, will reduce the effectiveness of the school trustee. I share that concern. I think the role of the school trustee is going to become almost irrelevant other than as a whipping post for government, and eventually people will question why we have school trustees at all. There's a very clear sense that school councils are there, ready to take the place of school boards, and maybe it's all right if school boards just dissolve. I'd like your comments on whether you see that as a legitimate role for school councils.

Mrs MacFarlane: I agree with what you are saying, Mrs McLeod. It's a concern to the members of the school council that we have not yet had a definitive definition of our role. I should tell this committee that a number of our school council members are willing to stay on until we see the definition of the school council role, the actual mandate. We are not attuned to politics; we are working-class people. You can see how nervous we are in front of you.

We do the best we can but, quite frankly, there is so much coming at us from the education department that it's very difficult to pick your issues to stand up for. There are many issues that have come up that we would like to have addressed, but being few in numbers just yet — but we certainly zeroed in on Bill 104 for the very reasons you cite and for the other reasons we state.

Yes, we see the role of the elected trustee being diminished, and it is a serious concern to us from this large geographic area. We use our trustees. We approach our trustees. We have a very good accord with our trustees.

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Ms Worsley: With our trustees, we have three elected members for such a very large geographical area. We stretch from Highway 9 to almost New Lowell, the Airport Road area to Highway 27, and for three people to cover that is quite extensive when they have to have representation at the schools as well. The tax base is mostly rural, not very much business base, and if we're having anything to do with taxes, it's going to have to be more equitable from business in other areas.

Ms Lankin: Thank you very much. This is an area I am interested in as well. It has struck me that virtually every representative of parent councils that have come forward and virtually all student representation that has come before the committee — and there haven't been as many students we've heard from — have been opposed to these changes, sometimes based on the boundaries and the size of the boards but more often on this issue of taking away powers from those trustees and somehow moving them down to the parent council level or centralizing decision-making in the bureaucracy of the ministry. I think people fear that.

I'm wondering if perhaps from a student perspective we could get some comments about how you see the role

of trustees in this area — Do you have a student representative on the board of trustees? Is that something you would like to have? — and how you see the role of parent councils, and if they were to take on more responsibilities at the school level, what would that mean in terms of variances from school to school?

Ms Tulloch: Speaking from a student council point of view, we have our vice-president and our president who go up to Barrie, the Simcoe County Board of Education, to speak and sit in on the meetings which are going on. I feel they're able to have an input into what's going on in our school, and they're able to tell us what is going on with them, so there's that relation there.

If there were to be fewer trustees, there wouldn't be that relation there because they would have such a broad area to deal with; they wouldn't know what's going on in our school. There is a trustee for each school, and if that was to be reduced, how would they know what's going in our school: what we need, what we do? I just feel there's less of a connection there and that you need that to effectively run a school and have that relationship there with the students.

Ms Pendleton: I think our parent council is really important, but I don't think it could do the job that the trustees do, not that it isn't capable, but the trustees are from certain areas. I just don't think it can be traded.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): It's nice to see that we have some students here. I really appreciate your coming out here today and taking the time to make your presentation. I'd just like to ask one of the students a question, whether you're in favour of equal base funding, in other words, that every student in the province receives the same amount for their education, regardless of the geography or the type of school board?

Ms Tulloch: I believe that every student should be entitled to an equal opportunity when it comes to education, because education is what lets someone — their goal in life. I won't get into the specifics, but I was always told a post-secondary education, or even from the secondary level to lead you into that educational realm, will leave you further ahead. When you — I don't want to say discriminate, but when you don't have the equal distribution of that equal tax base for education, who's to say what child gets it and who doesn't? You have to be fair, I believe. That's my personal opinion.

Ms Pendleton: Maybe people in the north who don't have the facilities we have in the south should be given some special consideration, not totally, but just a bit, because they don't have access to the facilities we have access to.

Mr Tascona: With respect to the role students play in the education system, would you like to see a greater role for students with school boards and the school councils?

Ms Tulloch: I believe students should have a say in what is going on since the educational system is for the students. We're the ones who are in the system. We're the ones who are either going to benefit or not benefit from the system. We can't say, "Do this," or "Don't do this." We can have a say in saying how it's going to affect us, how we're going to benefit from the system, but I believe we should have a part in what is going on. The most we can do is say what we feel, what our opinions are and how it could be bettered, if possible.

Mr Tascona: Is there a specific area where you'd like to make a contribution in the system?

Ms Tulloch: I can't tell you that, because I don't know all aspects of the system, but when we are offered the opportunity to go speak in that particular area we would gladly go and be a part of that.

Mr Tascona: Do you know that at one time school trustees were strictly volunteers?

Ms Tulloch: I don't recall that, no.

Mr Tascona: At one time they were, so I'm just curious with respect to — maybe Wendy can answer. How in your own mind do you characterize the type of trustee who may emerge if, for example, there is \$5,000 in remuneration?

Mrs MacFarlane: I have spoken with several of the Simcoe county board of trustees, who represent Banting and the area to the south — I don't know the people to the north particularly well — and I would like to say that, to a person, they have indicated that it is not the amount of remuneration that is going to determine whether they run in the election next time. They are that committed. We are very lucky to have some of the trustees we have, and we appreciate that.

However, having said that, I think there is a perception out there in the public that if you give a cap of \$5,000 to these people — it may not be your intention, but you tend to depreciate the value of the job they will be doing by putting that limit on them.

I quite honestly agree with you that there are a number of trustees out there who are overpaid. I believe the trustees in this area, if I'm not mistaken, earn \$14,000 or thereabouts, which for those who do their job properly — and that is not all of them, sir — that is not nearly enough money for the hours they put in.

Interjection.

Mrs MacFarlane: No sir, I wouldn't tell you.

The Vice-Chair: I'd like to thank all of you for attending. It's particularly good to see young people coming out to share their views, and as always, we welcome your input. Thank you very much.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Chair, Mr Tascona's question raises another area of information I think the committee should have and I don't believe has asked for yet, and that is the range of salaries and the salaries paid by different boards to their trustees. It follows from a comment yesterday that there tends to be sweeping change brought in to respond to single exceptions. I think this is another situation where that's the case and we should see the actual fact of trustees' salaries across the province.

Mr Skarica: Do you want that from the ministry or from legislative research?

Mrs McLeod: Whichever is easier. I assume the ministry has it readily —

The Vice-Chair: We'll ask the ministry for that.

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WEST PARRY SOUND
BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the West Parry Sound Board of Education, Sue Woodhouse, chair. Welcome.

Mrs Sue Woodhouse: Mr Chair, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to make a presentation to you today on behalf of the West Parry Sound Board of Education. My name is Sue Woodhouse; I am chair of the board. I am accompanied by Ann Daleman, the vice-chair. Between us, we have been trustees for over 27 years. Ann and I know our community very well.

Most of my oral submission will be the same as the written one you probably have in front of you. However, to try to leave time for questions, I may just shorten it up a bit, and I would like to concentrate specifically on the uniqueness of small rural boards like ours.

The West Parry Sound Board of Education is opposed to Bill 104 and the forced amalgamation of our board with distant boards, which will lead to unnecessary expense and the loss of local representation. It is our belief that opportunity for students and accountability will not be enhanced by a "bigger is better" model, dependent on some distant faceless decision-makers.

The West Parry Sound Board of Education is a small, cost-efficient and effective school board in northern Ontario. Our students are successful, and we have initiated a number of innovative programs that are being replicated elsewhere. We spend less per pupil than most boards, largely because of the commitment to teamwork widespread throughout our community and our school system. The last five years have seen our provincial grants reduced by over 56%. We have grown very used to "made in Parry Sound" solutions.

Bill 104 will dismantle the West Parry Sound Board of Education with little regard for the impact upon our community or our children. No one knows the needs of children and families like those within the community they serve. We are concerned that amalgamation with a board 155 kilometres away will isolate the decision-making from our community and negate our current ability to forge the local partnerships that are so crucial to the children in west Parry Sound.

We subscribe to the adage, "It takes a whole community to raise a child." We recognized several years ago that in light of those rapidly decreasing provincial grants, community partnerships were going to be driving the growth of educational opportunities and better results for our children. We made the development of those partnerships a priority in our planning. Trustees are crucial to the continued development and strengthening of those links. We cannot expect anything like the same level of commitment to the people we represent by the one, possibly two, trustees who will be left on the new district board and who will be expected to represent our huge west Parry Sound area.

We have built a natural, efficient unit around the common centre of Parry Sound. Amalgamation that is forced, geographically unrealistic and culturally insensitive takes away from the expansion of community-driven efforts.

West Parry Sound is unique in many ways. For instance, we have five first nations in our area with whom we have very positive relations. This does not just happen. It takes work, commitment and mutual understanding. In 1968, we were the first board in Ontario to

formally recognize the importance of first nations representation by adding a native trustee to our board. A special curriculum project recently developed by us, with the help of local elders, is regarded as the best of its kind in the province. We are very concerned that native representation on the new district board would be greatly diluted by the restructuring. What is a model system could lose its effectiveness.

While education is our mandate, rural school boards must be recognized for the pivotal role they play within the community. The West Parry Sound Board of Education is a core community institution, the second-largest corporate body in the district and the second-largest employer. Dismantling a structure of this stature truly has community implications unparalleled within urban centres.

The new district board will cover an area of 15,082 square kilometres, nearly three times the size of Prince Edward Island. Our board is likely to have the least representation in the new district board and be the most geographically isolated. If our closest neighbouring high schools, which are in the Muskoka board, move towards their new district boundary to the east, the students in our one high school will lose the benefits of the traditional links we have shared in the past, thus becoming more isolated than ever before.

The parents in our community have traditionally felt very free to speak to trustees and the board on matters that concern them. They have been able to take concerns to a working committee of the board and fully participate as an issue is being discussed. We know that many parents will have neither the confidence nor the ability to travel huge distances to state their case to the new district board trustees. A four-hour return trip to a district board office in North Bay, especially in northern winter driving conditions, will certainly prove a barrier to traditional parental involvement. The accessibility and openness presently in place will diminish with the new board structure.

We are in favour of strengthening school councils. It may be argued that parents should channel their issues to school councils rather than the district school board. It is important to point out, however, that the functions of school councils, which advocate only for their individual schools, remain very different from those of trustees, who strive for system-wide equity and quality. School council volunteers act in an advisory capacity only and thus are not positioned to fill the decision-making role of a local board of education.

A further blow to the people of Ontario comes from the sweeping and undemocratic powers of the Education Improvement Commission. The power vested in these unelected, provincially appointed commissioners is truly an assault on democracy. It is this kind of political action that leaves the public stunned that our democratic rights are so vulnerable.

The province is ignoring the costs of amalgamation. In June 1995, our board did an amalgamation impact study that found savings of only 1%, while we estimated the cost to be substantially more, both as a one-time cost and as an ongoing liability. Our report corresponds with the Ernst and Young study recently released by the ministry.

However, unlike ours, the government report failed to calculate the additional costs of amalgamation.

All school boards in Ontario I believe spend at a per pupil cost greater than that allocated by the ministry. Our neighbouring boards of Nipissing, east Parry Sound and Muskoka operate with above-ceiling costs of \$803, \$910 and \$1,025 respectively. West Parry Sound's per pupil costs are only \$490 above the ceiling. Also, unlike two of our three neighbouring boards, we have no long-term debt.

It will be the funding model, not amalgamation, that will achieve the desired result of equity in funding across the province. Amalgamation has nothing to do with that issue. In our case, any increased funding that we may receive through a new funding model could be lost to the huge costs of amalgamation and the debts of other boards.

We believe the provincial government must pay the major share of education funding, to ensure equity for all students across Ontario. We also believe that boards should be given the ability to levy a limited amount from the property tax to respond with flexibility to locally determined needs.

We have been frugal and we have been fiscally responsible. Our low per pupil costs demonstrate that. Amalgamation will not benefit our children if there are no identifiable net savings and money is lost from the classroom to pay the costs of amalgamation.

The West Parry Sound Board of Education agrees that changes are essential to keep our education system relevant and effective. We are not here to suggest that the status quo be protected at all costs. In fact, several times our board has requested the province to initiate legislation to enable us to make change at the local level. There was no response.

We agree that student achievement and curriculum development should be both a local and a provincial priority. We support the ministry's directions to improve accountability and raise standards through the Education Quality and Accountability Office, and by providing the necessary support materials to make curriculum change possible.

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The economic and accountability goals of the province can be met. Local boards could remain in place, if assistance is forthcoming from the government, together with clear criteria and formulae for boards to meet in areas of classroom support, administrative costs and special education.

There appears to be no rationale for Bill 104, no criteria that the minister wants school boards to meet, no impact studies substantiating change and an apparent total disregard for individual differences and local consultation. Sweeping structural changes were announced without a supporting implementation plan. Is it any wonder that worry, anger and resistance result? We have no confidence that the province has a clear sense of direction or vision for Ontario's education system.

School board trustees, unlike municipal representatives, have been shut out of the decision-making process, but we will be left to pick up the pieces and make the new system work, which we will do. We are concerned that as

a result of the government's lack of consultation and planning with local boards, our staff are demoralized, parents and students are confused and expectations may be unrealistic. This is the state of education as we experience a rushed, undemocratic and unplanned transition to a new system. The education of future generations is far too great a responsibility to be left to distant bureaucrats for their administrative convenience.

In conclusion, we ask you to acknowledge that central government solutions are not always appropriate for the rural north. We should be looked at individually. We ask that school boards be shown the respect of having our operations assessed separately, before forcing our adherence to this undemocratic and inflexible piece of legislation.

We have some recommendations attached on the last page. I ask you to read those. If there any questions now, we'd be delighted to answer them if we have time. Also, we do have a few copies of our amalgamation impact study and several other things, if anybody would like them.

Mr Skarica: I'm wondering if you could table that. I'd like to see it.

The Vice-Chair: If you want to table that, we can distribute it to members of the committee.

Mrs Woodhouse: I only brought a few copies.

The Vice-Chair: We'll make copies. We have approximately one minute per caucus.

Mr Wildman: Thank you for your presentation. There are a lot of things I'd like to ask you about. On page 5, I'd like to refer to the last two sentences in the first paragraph, where you say you are concerned about the government's lack of consultation and planning with local boards and you talk about the confusion and demoralization and then you say, "This is the state of education as we experience a rushed, undemocratic and unplanned transition to a new system."

Would you favour — and I think it may be in your recommendations, I just glanced at them — not proceeding with final passage of this legislation until you see the whole package of education reform, including the funding formula and whatever changes there may be coming with regard to collective bargaining and so on? Would that be a more planned and reasonable approach, do you think?

Mrs Ann Daleman: Yes, we have a lot of concerns that this has been rushed, that it's not been well thought out. Boards have not been consulted. From all of our impact studies, we do not see any value as to what's being proposed. We feel that if the government sat down and consulted, it could come up with a much better plan.

Mrs Woodhouse: Could I just add one —

The Vice-Chair: No, I'm sorry. The government caucus.

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): In your brief you've indicated that you had some ideas for local changes that you might bring in. I wonder if you could outline to the committee what ideas you had on local changes.

Mrs Woodhouse: Probably the easiest and most interesting to some of the PCs might be the fact that we requested change to assist us to reduce the number of trustees in our board and we requested that in 1995, the

reason being based on the allocation of trustees through townships. There are five trustees in the town of Parry Sound but none in the area of the archipelago that was the one that paid the majority of taxes for education funding for our area. We placed a trustee in the archipelago because we thought that they had the right, since they were paying — and most of them were non-resident anyway; they had cottages there — to have a voice in what was happening in our education system and our budgeting process. That legislation wasn't changed but it needed to be changed. Now, with the assessment and the funding model changing anyway, that may become a little more irrelevant, and certainly the number of trustees looks as if it's going to be reduced but not necessarily rightly so.

Mrs McLeod: I have too many question for one minute, but I think I'll focus on the point that you make, that amalgamation is not going to save money. I'll be very interested in seeing your own impact study in that regard. But we know from the study that the Ministry of Education had done to confirm its own assumptions about savings that the most it could identify was \$150 million across the province, and that included taking money directly out of classroom supplies and equipment, very little money actually to be saved from the amalgamation process itself. In fact, their own study consultant said that it could cost more to amalgamate. Given all that, why do you think the amalgamations are proceeding?

Mrs Woodhouse: I hate to be so cynical but I just think that something is being picked up by provincial politicians who think that people are going to accept the fact that boards are top-heavy. Trustees are not the story, trustees have never been the story; it's the children in the classroom that are the story. We are not egocentric politicians, most of us; we're ones who earn \$5,000 a year in west Parry Sound, and many around us. I think it's just something that's perceived as a vote getter, for no reason.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation and for responding to our questions.

CONSEIL DES ÉCOLES FRANÇAISES DE LA COMMUNAUTÉ URBAINE DE TORONTO

Le Vice-Président : The next delegation is le Conseil des écoles françaises de la communauté urbaine de Toronto.

Bonjour. Maintenant, je veux exprimer quelque chose pour vous en français et aussi en anglais. Si vous voulez donner votre présentation en français, c'est okay. Notre service de traduction n'est pas ici aujourd'hui, parce que le comté de Simcoe n'est pas désigné par la Loi 8, mais pour le comité, nous pouvons avoir une traduction de vos remarques, si vous préférez donner votre présentation en français.

Simcoe county is not in its entirety declared a designated area for the provision of French-language services. Therefore, translation services have not been brought with us. I've checked that this has been the practice in the past. If it's your preference to give your presentation in French, that certainly is okay. I will caution you, though,

that a number of the members do not speak French and it may make it difficult to pose questions.

Mr Mohammed Brihmi: Thank you, members. I wish I could have the opportunity to speak in French, but I understand that we are interested also in exchanging with the members of the committee and we accept — I mean, we don't have a choice — to make our presentation in English, even though I spoke with the clerk's office and informed them that we were going to make our presentation in French. They told us that there was no problem with that. We understood from that that we would have translation with it.

Le Vice-Président : Je regrette ces circonstances, mais c'est notre réalité maintenant. Si vous préférez donner votre présentation en français c'est okay, mais le plus grand nombre de députés ici ne peuvent pas parler français et ne comprendront pas votre présentation. Je regrette.

Mr Brihmi: I would like to thank the members of the committee for the opportunity to make this presentation. My name is Mohammed Brihmi and I am chair of the Conseil des écoles françaises de la communauté urbaine de Toronto, known as the Metropolitan Toronto French-language School Council. We are better known throughout the province by our acronym, CEF CUT.

I am accompanied today by our director of education, Alice Ducharme, and also by our student trustee, Pasha Yamotahari.

CEFCUT is one of only four French-language school boards which presently exist in Ontario. Bill 104 will create a total of 11 French-language district school boards, and as francophones we are deeply grateful. As you may already know, francophones in Ontario have been working very hard for several decades to have their constitutional rights fully recognized with respect to French-language education. Finally, after all these years, hope will become a reality.

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This jubilation, however, does not preclude the fact that our board has some concerns with respect to Bill 104. Naturally, our first concern is the students we will be serving in the proposed French-language public district school board for southern Ontario. Within this very vast territory, which by the way covers more than 70,000 square kilometres, an area greater than the provinces of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island combined — and you can see it on the map over here, the area we will cover; all this area from here to Windsor — there are more than 8,000 francophone public students who are not receiving their education in French-language public schools. They are obliged to attend immersion schools, English-language public schools or French-language Catholic schools because several boards of education in this very large region have not fulfilled their obligations towards their francophone population.

The parents of these students have been requesting their own French-language public schools for years, and their expectations of this new board are extremely high. They have a right to their own schools, they want their own schools and they want them now. You can appreciate, therefore, that the trustees elected to the new board will be spending a great deal of time establishing long-

awaited French-language public schools throughout this vast region.

In order to properly respond to the needs of students and to fulfil its legal obligations to the francophone electors, a board of this size will require the maximum number of trustees which Bill 104 will allow. Such a vast territory will also necessitate looking at new ways of conducting the board's business, such as by video-conferencing. This will in turn require not only special startup funding but also funds for the maintenance of such a communication system. Amendments to the Education Act will also have to be considered to allow for video meetings.

We therefore recommend that the French-language public district school board proposed for southern Ontario be represented by the maximum number of trustees proposed in Bill 104 and that the required funding and legislation be put into place to allow board meetings to be held via electronic media.

The diverse needs of the students within such a large board require a vast range of special programs. The needs of francophone students in Metropolitan Toronto who come from such areas as Somalia, Rwanda, Zaire and Haiti, to name but a few, are vastly different than those of students in Elmville, Sarnia, Welland, London or Canadian Forces Base Borden.

The child living in Sarnia who enters kindergarten unable to speak French because his parents have suffered the consequences of years of assimilation requires a special program. That child also requires access to day care and after-school services in French, which in most areas are non-existent. That is why several French-language school boards and French-language sections have had to accommodate day care services in their schools as another measure to counter assimilation.

The 12-year-old student who arrives in Toronto from Rwanda unable to read and write because he has never had the chance to attend school requires a special program. The 15-year-old who arrives at Borden from Bagotville and can barely speak or understand English requires a special program. The small pockets of francophone families in Owen Sound, Kincardine and Peterborough who do not have access to any French-language schools will require special services until such time as a French-language school can be established in their area.

In accordance with the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto Act, our board cannot operate schools or classes for the trainable retarded. I'm referring to section 130, chapter 62 of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto Act. There are presently no French-language programs or French-language schools to accommodate these students anywhere in the entire territory to be covered by the proposed board. These students must be allowed to receive their special programs in French.

For francophones residing in areas that are not required by law to provide French-language services, a school board incurs even greater expenses by having to provide these services for its students, for example, social workers and speech therapists.

We are extremely concerned that the funding for such a large board with such a diverse student population will not sufficiently meet the identified needs. We therefore

recommend that special funding be put into place for boards serving a minority language population within a geographic area greater than 50,000 square kilometres.

If the government's overall objective is to increase quality in the education system and to focus more resources on students and their needs, our board is very concerned about the flagrant disregard of student trustees in Bill 104. In September 1996, our board welcomed its first student trustee, Mr Pasha Yamotahari. The experience has been very rewarding, not only for our board but also for the student. Mr Yamotahari has provided us with realistic feedback and a different perspective on several matters brought before the board. This has made us more accountable to our students who are *notre raison d'être*, contributed to better, more informed decisions and has provided valuable insight into the impact these decisions have on the classroom. Several other school boards in Ontario have student trustees, and I have provided you with a copy of a report prepared by one of them on the benefits of student representation on school boards.

We therefore recommend that relevant legislation be amended to allow student trustees representation on district school boards in addition to the maximum number of trustees determined by subsection 327(6) of the act, Bill 104, and that the student trustee be allowed to vote.

Our fourth concern is the blatant unfairness of Bill 104 with respect to the omission of any measures relating to employees presently working within our boards. They should be given the same consideration that municipal employees will receive through provisions contained in Bill 103. We therefore recommend that the same provisions contained in Bill 103 for municipal employees be included in Bill 104.

In conclusion, as francophones, far from being dissatisfied with Bill 104, we see it as a major step in the full recognition of our rights with respect to French-language education. We believe, however, that this bill can be improved, and we hope you will consider our recommendations. They are very realistic recommendations, and we feel they will enable this government to better meet its overall objective, which is to increase the quality of the education system in Ontario.

Mr Skarica: As you indicated, many of the French-language boards are going to be very large and cover a great geographic area. How do you intend at the present time to deal with those types of problems and challenges?
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Mr Brihmi: As we indicated, it will be a real challenge to have real representation and the trustees being accountable to their population. The other problem we see is that we will have diverse needs, and we will have to work hard to satisfy different needs. For instance, the needs of the students in the Metro Toronto area might be quite different from the needs of students in Sarnia or in other areas, like Penetanguishene or Lafontaine, not far from here.

We are afraid the funding will cease because, for the time being, we are quite privileged to be part of Metro Toronto. Indeed, we benefit from the residential and commercial taxes we collect from the Metro Toronto area, which allow us to respond to most of our needs. But the difficulty is that a lot of the areas we'll represent

won't have access to that large commercial and industrial taxation, and we are wondering how we'll fulfil our commitment to offer the best services to our students. It will be a real challenge, and we hope we get sufficient funding to accommodate that.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much. I think it's very legitimate wondering that you're doing, and I share your sense that this is a major step forward for something that Franco-Ontarians have wanted to see for some time. But as another presenter said to us in the north yesterday, the crux of the war is in the funding.

One of the concerns I have is how hurriedly Bill 104 has come forward and how much actual preparation has been done in terms of an understanding of the cost implications of the bill. Have you had a chance to do even some preliminary assessment of the costs of establishing the new board, establishing the new schools that would be needed and meeting those individual needs, and have you had any discussions with the Ministry of Education as to their understanding of the costs that will have to be met if you are to meet the needs of those students?

Mr Brihmi: For the time being, we haven't had any discussions with the government regarding those very important needs, and indeed we don't know exactly how much it will cost us, for instance, to offer the same education for the new school boards. We haven't done this type of research. I will let our director respond to this, because she was also working with other administrators in this same school board.

The Vice-Chair: I will ask you to keep it very brief.

Ms Alice Ducharme: We're working right now on an impact study. I did meet with Mr Cooke and Ms Vanstone to express our feelings about this. We are very concerned about the funding and how they are going to address this issue and how rapidly they should.

M^{me} Lankin : Monsieur Brihmi, merci à vous et à votre collègue. Je comprends que vous aimez ce projet de loi, mais vous avez quelques problèmes avec ce projet de loi aussi. Je voudrais poser une question, mais je veux faire ça en anglais.

It relates also to the size of the board. You've raised issues like, what will the funding be? We know that's not contained in this bill, and of course that's one of the problems, this piecemeal approach to reform of education that we are seeing and how all these pieces will fit together in the end.

I want to ask you a question that is also not directly contained in the bill but which I think poses a problem given the size of the board that is proposed, that being related to the new proposal the government seems to be considering: to download the cost of education capital, new school construction and school maintenance, to the municipal level. Far from disentanglement and taking all the education costs up, the new proposal seems to shift part of it back down.

What would that mean for a school board such as yours, for example, if you were looking at the need for construction of a new French-language school in Metropolitan Toronto or the surrounding area and people in Essex didn't have that same requirement and yet the municipalities covered by the area of the school board

would be obligated to fully fund those costs? Have you thought through what that kind of proposal would mean and what problems it would pose for a board such as what is being proposed by the legislation?

The Vice-Chair: Very briefly, please.

Mr Brihmi: To be honest with you, it's a headache for us and we haven't gone through it, but I know that it would be very difficult for us, as a francophone board, to ensure the capital funding for our schools if indeed this situation, what you are saying, happens.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you. Merci beaucoup pour votre présentation aujourd'hui à notre comité, mais il faut que nous procédions maintenant avec la prochaine délégation. Thank you very much for appearing today.

Questions to the parliamentary assistant. I recognize Ms Lankin first.

Ms Lankin: I would like to follow up on that area with a question to the parliamentary assistant. Under the existing proposal by the government to remove education costs from the property tax base and bring it up to the provincial base, how will capital funding allocations be made for boards such as the boards proposed for French-language schools?

Secondly, if in fact there is a change in that funding and municipalities would take over a certain responsibility within that, how would that affect capital decisions and approvals for capital decisions for French-language school boards such as the one we've heard from today?

The Vice-Chair: Thank you. We'll note those questions.

Mrs McLeod: My question is along the same lines but on the operating costs rather than the capital costs for establishing French-language boards. I would like to know the ministry's cost estimates of the establishment of the French-language boards under Bill 104, their commitment to meeting those costs and where the dollars will be found in the budget; whether they will be drawn from existing Ministry of Education budgets.

The Vice-Chair: Those questions will be noted and responded to. Just a point of information for the members of the committee, you'll note that your schedule showed a 10-minute presentation for the Metro Toronto French school board. That was a typo; it should have shown a 15-minute presentation. Just so you'll be aware, because it is a school board and that was agreed to by the sub-committee.

1400

ONTARIO COALITION FOR EDUCATION REFORM

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the Ontario coalition for education reform. Mrs Somers, you have 15 minutes. Before you begin, I just want to point out to all members of the committee that, in addition to her written presentation, they have provided us with two copies of this book. It's called *Could Do Better: What's Wrong with Public Education in Ontario and How to Fix It*. One has been provided to the government, and one has been provided to the two opposition parties to share.

Mrs Maureen Somers: Good afternoon. My name is Maureen Somers. I'm a parent of three school-age

children. Since 1991 I've been actively engaged in the education reform movement, and I'm presently the co-chair of the Ontario Coalition for Education Reform.

The OCER was founded in 1993 as an umbrella organization serving a wide range of educational groups. Member groups include teachers, parents, school trustees and ratepayers dedicated to improving Ontario's educational system. The OCER established itself as an effective voice for education reform in Ontario thanks in large part to its 1994 report titled *Could Do Better: What's Wrong with Public Education in Ontario and How to Fix It*.

It has often been said that the longest journey starts with the smallest step. For myself and the other members of the OCER, we believe that the reduction of the number of school boards and school trustees in Bill 104 is a small but crucial step on a very long road towards fixing a system which is in fact broken. The Tory government and the Minister of Education and Training must take this crucial initiative to bring real accountability to Ontario's educational system.

Bill 104 addresses the issue of what I call the little schoolers versus the big schoolers. There are two groups of people tugging at our schools. On one side are the little schoolers; these are parents, dedicated teachers and the taxpayers. On the other side are the big schoolers; these are the school boards, the unions and the school trustees.

The little schoolers believe they have been paying too much for too little. They have lost the right to determine how their tax money should be spent and how their schools should be run. They believe schools should stress achievement, financial and academic accountability, and that competition is better than the present monopoly. They believe schools were built for the children and are owned by the people; schools were not built to provide employment, not built for the administrators, the teachers and the unions.

The big schoolers believe that unlimited spending of the taxpayers' money and quality are directly related. This is not the case, as recent international test comparisons have proven. The big schoolers do not believe they must work in the disciplined world of balanced accounts, because they know they can always make up the revenue side of the ledger by drawing more money from the taxpayers. Big schoolers spend money on the bureaucracy, armies of educrats, directors, consultants, superintendents and the trustees. The big schoolers are responsible for having persuaded the governments of the last 15 years that all the system needed was more money, more consultants, more warm and fuzzy programs. The big schoolers created a top-heavy, centralized system to suit themselves.

The OCER's 1994 report on Ontario's education system found that from the beginning of the 1980s to 1991 the school-age population in Ontario dropped and the number of students increased by barely 0.5% annually, yet local government spending on education tripled, with school board employment showing average yearly increases of 2% and remuneration growing close to 9%. Over the decade to 1990, non-teaching clerical and paraprofessional staff increased by 84% and supervisory officers and consultants increased by 22%. In the second-

ary system the number of consultants grew by 80% and the number of teachers and principals working outside the classroom increased by 128%.

By now much of the cost of education relates to the growth in the bureaucracies that run our schools and the large pool of non-classroom staff. Probably 50% to 70% of the jobs in these bureaucracies could be eliminated with no noticeable effect on the schools other than profound relief. People working today in the administrative positions at the school boards and the school trustees are not needed at all for children to learn well. The truly competent and dedicated teacher is the only truly important employee of the whole system.

The school boards tell us that there's no evidence that our education system has deteriorated and Ontario has one of the best education systems in the world. Ironically, by every measure other than the school board bureaucracy's own tests and benchmarks, our education system has proven to be ineffective. What few international comparisons we have tell us that Canadian students consistently score anywhere from average to poor against their international counterparts, yet Ontario is one of the world's largest education spenders, \$16.9 billion per year.

The educrats at the school boards, the unions and the school trustees are truly only interested in job security. These groups have a grave stake in preserving their authority and so far have had the clout to do it. They have large numbers at their command, they have our money and they have our children under their influence. Recent events prove my point. The picket-line unionists known as the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association plan court action and classroom sanctions against Bill 104. Those who don't agree with Bill 104 feel no compunction about using our tax dollars to fight the government in court or using our children to their ends.

Clipping the wings of the school boards and the school trustees and dumping many of their lapdog educrats is long overdue. School boards must be reduced into accountable entities. School trustees have abdicated their responsibility as democratic watchdogs. Their numbers should be reduced. School trustees do have a place, but not in their present incarnation as yes-men instead of watchmen.

Bill 104 is a small crucial step that the Tory government must take now to bring real accountability to Ontario's education system. The power the unions wield has stopped many a government and ministers of education from improving Ontario's education system. The members of the Ontario Coalition for Education Reform believe that a majority government with plenty of political will has the ultimate power to eliminate two very expensive, redundant layers of bureaucracy. The OCER believes the task of reducing the school boards and reducing the school trustees is urgent, the need is clear and the time is now. Thank you very much.

Interruption.

The Acting Chair (Mr Ted Arnott): Thank you, Mrs Somers, for your presentation. Before we start with questions, I ask everyone in the gallery to please refrain from any sort of interjections.

Questions start with the official opposition.

Mrs McLeod: How much time do we have, Mr Chairman?

The Acting Chair: About a minute per caucus.

Mrs McLeod: So we've got to focus on only one area. That's regrettable. Perhaps then I'll pick up on your defining people involved in and concerned about education into the camps of little schoolers and big schoolers. I particularly note that you include in the little schoolers' camp parents. While I don't accept the differentiation you make between the camps, I do want to talk about parents and the kinds of submissions we've had from parents to our committee in the days we've had in hearings already.

I should tell you that without exception, parents from parent councils have expressed concerns about Bill 104. In Ottawa we had umbrella parent council groups representing some 57 parent councils. In Carleton they represented some 37 parent councils. In Thunder Bay we had a group representing separate school parent councils and there were 30 represented in that group, over 30 parent councils represented in the Lakehead, and that goes on and on. Without exception, the parent councils have expressed their concerns about Bill 104 and its implications for publicly funded education. I assume you would still consider those parents to be in your little schooler group. I wonder then how you would account for the fact that their view is so different from the one you've ascribed to little schoolers in your brief.

Mrs Somers: I do include parents from the parent councils as little schoolers. I myself sit on a parent council for our local high school. It's my opinion that many of the parents whom I've heard give presentations regarding Bill 104 unfortunately have been spoonfed the union rhetoric. They have been, in my area, holding meetings with a number of our parents from our councils locally. A lot of the information that these parent councils have been receiving, because I received it myself, is union propaganda. It's my opinion that many of these parents are misinformed.

I for one brought the first delegation of parents and teachers from across Ontario to meet with ministry officials back in 1992. We also in turn met with Mike Harris on two occasions, with 62 parents and teachers from across the province. We contributed to your Blueprint in Learning report.

As far as these councils go, these councils are sitting in advisory positions only. Many of them at my council who wanted to discuss Bill 104 were told at the parent council meeting that this was not the appropriate place to be discussing Bill 104. Mind you, a week later there was a town hall meeting held and our parent council people were invited to attend the meeting that was being held by the local union representative.

Mr Wildman: I take from your brief that you support Bill 104 and I also understand that you're very much opposed to educators and bureaucracy. That being the case, could you explain why you are in support of a bill that establishes an Education Improvement Commission, an additional layer of bureaucracy in education?

1410

Mrs Somers: It's my understanding that Mr Cooke and Ann Vanstone are responsible for overseeing that the reduction of school boards does occur if this bill is

passed. I didn't say I necessarily agreed with that extra layer of bureaucracy, but if they're going to do the job and follow through for the Tory government when Bill 104 is passed, I will support them, and I will support that commission.

Mr Grimmer: I noticed in your brief that you raise considerable concern about the mediocre test scores that Ontario students have. As a parent of two students in the public system myself, I'm concerned about this. Do you think Bill 104 is going to bring about some change in that regard?

Mrs Somers: Presently, Bill 104 unfortunately is distracting people's attention away from the curriculum issue, which I've been a part of for years, and also the testing issue. I feel if Bill 104 is passed and the school boards are reduced and are forced to be more accountable, the other things will fall into place. I hope curriculum will be taken much more seriously than it has been in the past by these new regional boards; they must take it seriously. Curriculum drives everything; if we don't bring our attention back to that, your government initiatives on all the other issues will not be effective.

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs Somers, for your presentation. We appreciate your comments and your advice.

Mr O'Toole: Mr Chair, I'd like to correct the record. It has been stated here in this small debate that the Ontario Parent Council is clearly on record as supporting Bill 104. I think it's important to have all those in attendance today recognize that the Ontario Parent Council — which, by the way, was appointed by the NDP, David Cooke, when he was Minister of Education, for the right reasons. He is also clearly on record as being in support of Bill 104.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Chair, also for the record, it must be acknowledged that the Ontario Parent Council is an appointed body, not a school parent council, and that its position has been disowned by every subsequent presenter, by parent councils that were aware of it.

BARRIE ACTION COMMITTEE FOR WOMEN

The Acting Chair: I'd like to call forward our next presentation, the Barrie Action Committee for Women, Ms Sherrie Tingley. Welcome and we look forward to your comments.

Ms Sherrie Tingley: Thank you for this chance to address the committee. I was at a meeting last night in Barrie where a lot of parents expressed concern that they hadn't realized the contents of Bill 104 and that they hadn't had a chance to address the committee. Apparently, they learned about it on February 28, and I think the next day was the last chance.

The Barrie Action Committee for Women was founded by a group of women in 1989. We are dedicated to social, political and economic equality for women, so I guess we're the whining hypocrites and a special interest. More than half our members are women living in poverty, so we often look at issues through the lens of poverty. I haven't heard that yet today. Over the years with our community in Barrie, we have worked to ensure that those most affected by issues and decisions being

made have meaningful input into those decisions. We feel very strongly that Bill 104 is going to affect people and they haven't had meaningful input.

I am a founding member of the action committee for women. I have worked as a community volunteer for many years, sitting on such groups as the family violence committee of the Simcoe County Board of Education; Best Start Barrie, the maternal newborn committee of the Royal Victoria Hospital. I work as a coordinator of a very small non-profit in Barrie. I am the mother of a child in grade 8 in the public board here in Barrie. I spent two years working as a lunch-time supervisor and as a classroom volunteer, so I bring to my presentation an understanding of the daily life of the school community.

Bill 104 is not democratic. I think it's pretty simple. I'm sure you've heard it in every community. I don't know why we have to say it again and again: You're taking away the power of our elected officials and giving it to your own appointed body. What I have to ask is, why? I'm sure the government will tell me today that they are only trying to improve education. I wanted to take a look at the government's track record in terms of their concern about children and vulnerable people in this province.

In three court cases, lawyers for this government have argued that the government has no obligation to ensure that welfare is adequate, that children have food and shelter, so I'm finding it hard to believe that you're concerned about education or children. This government seems to feel that half a million children don't need food, so why would I believe you're concerned with education or their wellbeing?

When we learned that 10 families in Simcoe county had contacted the children's aid society asking to give up their children due to the cuts to welfare, the response of our MPP here, Joe Tascona — and he can correct me if I have it wrong — was something to the effect of, "One would only hope that people who have children would consider how they were going to support them before having them," this in light of the fact that 93% of these children were born well before their parents had to turn to welfare.

We also only have to look at the government allowing 7,000 families in the province to start school this year without the money that was theirs. I'm talking about the family support plan. Of course, this is another example of "improvement." I watch families in my community struggle to live on \$150 a month for everything, with no end in sight — and sort of denial from the government.

Why would I believe your concern is with education and our children, looking at your track record? You've already cut millions out of our school budget and we're seeing the affects on children. You've cut millions out of welfare; that affects our children. We're now seeing more women and children in this province homeless than single men.

All I have to say to the committee is, please withdraw the bill. Go back to the drawing board. Open it up. I don't know what your hurry is, unless it's the tax cut. Make it a democratic process. Bring in something that's a democratically elected body to govern education. We have that today.

I have a final comment about the volunteer aspect. It is an interesting question. I don't know if the people here today, sitting on the committee, are volunteering their time.

Mr Wildman: No, we're not volunteering our time. We are paid as MPPs and this is part of our job.

You said you attended a forum in Barrie and most people didn't know about the process or the impact of Bill 104. Who organized the forum and why do you think there wasn't more information available?

Ms Tingley: It was the local parent council at one of the schools that organized the forum. I'm having trouble recalling when Bill 104 came in. I don't know if it was part of mega-week.

Mr Wildman: Yes, it was.

Ms Tingley: I think people were overwhelmed with the question of downloading. Bills aren't necessarily a daily part of people's lives. I'm not quite sure where the bill came from. I hadn't heard any discussion that this was the direction we were going in. I think it's a very slow process, and added to that, parents do have demands on their time. They work. It's very difficult. It's a long process to be informed.

1420

Mr Wildman: You're right. The changes were announced on January 13 by the minister in Toronto as part of the beginning of the mega-week announcements. Initially, the government said they wanted to get this through and they didn't think it was necessary to hold hearings. Is there a benefit, do you think, from this process? Obviously, you think it's important or you wouldn't be here. Why did you choose to come and what do you hope will be achieved by us having these hearings here in Midhurst to allow you to have input and hear what you have to say?

Ms Tingley: I'm hoping I hear from the government after my presentation that they've chosen to withdraw Bill 104.

Mr Smith: Thank you very much. From a personal perspective, I don't think it should come as any surprise where this bill has come from. As a member who sat through the proceedings, during which time Mr Cooke was questioned very extensively and straightforwardly by Mr Silipo, the member for Dovercourt, concerning his viewpoint and the rationale for his accepting the position as a chair of the EIC, Mr Cooke made it very clear that he found comfort, some common direction between this government's intentions and the intentions of the previous government in terms of their aspirations to reform education in this province.

This is not a new issue in terms of who or how or when education finance, governance and curriculum were going to be addressed. Very clearly, given the concerns that other members from the different parties have expressed, there's some commonality on that point of view.

Given the extensive research, the royal commissions, the ongoing evaluations of education in this province, what would be your vision in terms of how you would go about reforming education in the province? What process would you use?

Ms Tingley: It's interesting that you talk about vision. I am concerned with the vision and I don't feel it's articulated very well in Bill 104. I don't see any guarantees for what we can expect in our school communities. I'm very concerned about the loss of the school family. I'm concerned about strangers being in our school every day. I don't feel you're articulating a vision.

In terms of equity of opportunity, I see that decreasing with this bill because I think parents will be expected to raise funds for things like libraries and what not. We will see within, say, the city of Barrie, vast differences, where one school has a library, or one school has clean floors —

Mr Smith: Excuse me for interrupting, but I'm most interested in the process you would use. If you were given the responsibility of reforming education, what process would you use to take on that task? As a government member, I have a responsibility to communicate observations back to the minister and I fully intend to do that, but I would like to hear what approach you would take in terms of addressing education reform in general.

Ms Tingley: I would involve diverse stakeholders and I would start with principles, in terms of starting from a principled point of view, and then have the legislation or whatever articulate that. I'm quite happy with the education my child is receiving today; maybe there are things I would like to build on. But all the stakeholders have to be sitting at the table if we need to redesign and throw out 100 years of a system, a very diverse group of stakeholders, and there has to be a process of people getting there.

Mrs McLeod: I can't resist wanting to help answer that question. If I were given the opportunity to start to reform the education system, I would say to Mr Smith that I would start by an identification of real needs. I wouldn't start by trying to describe the system as being broken and then describing the system as being overfunded and therefore targeting the system as a place where you can get \$1 billion to pay for a tax cut. That's how this began.

Mr Smith: Mrs McLeod, everybody was very clear about your approach in the red book.

The Vice-Chair: Order, Mr Smith. Mrs McLeod has the floor.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Smith, I would love to debate this with you, because at no point has anybody else, other than the Premier and the Minister of Education, said they want \$1 billion out of education. That was the prelude to everything we see in front of us today and everything we are likely to see in front of us for the next six to eight months.

Based on your presentation, one of your very real concerns is that there don't appear to be any dollars freed up for the classroom as a result of this. The ministry has not been able to find dollars to free up and they have not guaranteed that any dollars they might find are going back to the classroom; in fact, this could be the prelude to significant further cuts.

The question I'd like to ask you comes back to something that Gerald Caplan, who was one of the co-chairs of the Royal Commission on Learning, said to us when he presented to the committee. He reminded the commit-

tee members that in their study of educational reform they came to the conclusion that the amalgamation of boards was not something that should be undertaken because there was no indication it would make schools more effective for kids, no indication it would free dollars for classrooms, but it would certainly divert energies, as well as resources, to something that didn't really matter to kids in the end. He said the focus should be on early childhood and that's where we should put our resources. What would that mean to the families you work with, if that indeed was the first focus of reform?

Ms Tingley: I'm not paid to work with families; it's a volunteer organization. But one of our concerns is early childhood education, especially in light of workfare. People are very concerned about who's going to be looking after their children with workfare. In addition, to see JK gone when it was just in our grasp, that investment in children — we're seeing a reduction. There's an increased demand on families. People have to choose now between food and school activities. It's just incredible, and of course that's going to increase. There's going to be the have schools and the have-not schools.

This is very Orwellian, "the educational improvement." It's educational destruction. Ignorance is strength, I guess. That's what we're hearing from this group. I mean, that's the way I take it. I don't believe it. Looking at Toronto, 79% voted for something else, I guess.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much. We appreciate your time today.

1430

JANE CAWTHORNE

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is Jane Cawthorne. Welcome, Ms Cawthorne. You have 10 minutes.

Mrs Jane Cawthorne: My name is Jane Cawthorne. I am a proud member of a special interest group. I am especially interested in children, and I hope you are too.

I am a parent. My daughter is four and because there's no junior kindergarten in my area, she's currently enrolled in a Montessori school. I was also a teacher before she was born and I am very aware of the inestimable value of early childhood education. I am lucky that my family can afford to give my daughter this opportunity, can fill in the gaps in education left by the government. Many other people cannot. They depend solely on the government, on you in fact, to provide an excellent education for their children, one that utilizes everything we know about how best to educate children.

The minister has made it clear that he believes our schools are broken, that education costs too much. He says a staggering percentage of money spent on education is spent outside the classroom. But what exactly does he consider to be outside the classroom? Electricity, heat, custodial support, books, libraries, teacher-librarians, guidance counsellors, chalk? I submit that all these aspects of schooling and many more are a classroom expense. All of them have a direct bearing on the development and learning of our children. I know that government cuts affect the classroom and the government's attempt to hide the effect of the cuts by redefining what qualifies as a classroom expense will not fool me.

However, I am here today to talk about Bill 104, a bill that does not use everything we know about how best to educate children, a bill that does not have the best interests of our children in mind, a bill that does not even mention children. It is as though this government thinks it can recreate the conditions within which our children are publicly schooled without ever actually thinking about the children. You can, but at their peril.

Whether or not you believe that public education is broken, whether or not you buy into the idea that it's the cause of the deficit is, to a large extent, beside the point. This is not about ideology. The point is, we must serve the children and their best interests, not because they are customers or clients and we're some kind of service providers. That's too simplistic. We do it because it's our moral obligation.

The only rights and protections that children have in our society are the ones that the community of adults grants and preserves for them. These come at a price, the price is high, and the children are worth it. When you look at Bill 104, ask yourselves, does it serve the children?

First, the bill proposes reducing the number of school boards. Do this with caution, because this will affect the quality of local education, especially when you are considering reducing the number of boards in the province by half, from 129 to 66. Why so many? One of the factors that separates successful schooling from unsuccessful schooling is our ability to individualize curricula. Local boards design and implement locally relevant curricula, and as we reduce the number of boards we reduce our opportunity to make learning more relevant to our students, to represent diverse interests.

Seen within the context of a concomitant pledge to undertake standardized testing, I am questioning whether producing curriculum relevant to individual learners is still a priority in this system.

Our children will suffer further because of the huge number of students there will be in each new board. In Toronto, there will be over 300,000 students served by a maximum of 22 trustees, paid \$5,000 apiece for the task. They'll have to maintain full-time jobs. No one can live on \$5,000. How much will these trustees be able to do? How well can one trustee, who only has the hours outside of regular employment at his or her disposal, represent over 13,600 students in an area with the most diverse needs of any population in Ontario? How does this change serve our children?

Of course the role of the trustee is going to be pretty much academic anyway, with the creation of the Education Improvement Commission. This bill is clearly not just about amalgamating school boards. There is another agenda. In a nutshell, the EIC is appointed, not elected. They assume all decision-making powers, everything trustees used to do, including control of budgets and board assets. But the big difference is, they're completely unaccountable. They're not accountable to me, the voter, the taxpayer, to teachers, principals, parents, students — no one but the minister. In fact, if parents like me have the audacity to interfere with the all-powerful EIC, we will be charged with obstruction and fined.

Worse yet, the EIC's decisions will have the force of law. The Education Improvement Commission can spend lots of money, it will cost lots of money, and it's a new level of bureaucracy, but it is unelected, unaccountable, unstoppable and fully protected from liability, and is already paralyzing school boards, since its tenure extends back into January.

We will lose a local level of democracy, we will lose local control of education funds that are crucial to meeting the special needs of each student, and what we lose will go directly under the control of the province, including board assets. Well, how convenient for a provincial government trying to fund a tax cut. I am astonished that you've attempted to overrule the democratic process here.

Who is this supposed to serve? The children? I can't see how. The bill suggests the EIC will find a way to contract out support staff. You're union-busting at the expense of the children. The support staff in school are part of a community of adults who ensure our children's safety. A custodian at school doesn't just push a broom. A custodian knows the names of many of the children as part of the group of adults who make a child feel welcome, known and safe at school. They can recognize unfamiliar faces and protect the children from potential harm.

The secretary is someone every child in the school knows, the person who does everything from dispensing Band-Aids to keeping confidential records using complicated technology. These support staff are the glue that hold this community together and you want to contract them out to the lowest bidder. You will teach the children that loyalty, dedication and quality of work are meaningless, but more important, you will be jeopardizing their safety by introducing a continually changing staff who will not be strongly committed to our children.

Bill 104 suggests that parents will continue to have an influence through the extension of their roles in school councils. Frankly, you're living in a dream world. You're living in a world where June and Ward Cleaver live. You think parents have the time and financial freedom to dedicate themselves to their children's schools, raising funds, funds that may not even be under the school's control any more, and otherwise picking up the slack left by the failure of government to adequately school our children. In an ideal world they would, but in our real world this is not the case.

Parents, myself included, do not wish to work as unpaid school trustees, and what if no one volunteers? In homes where both parents work, in single-parent families, in homes that are struggling with poverty, this is one role there will simply be no time or energy left to fulfil. You can't legislate people to volunteer.

The truth is, any public school system that depends on the generosity and volunteer spirit of community parents to function is doomed to provide unequal opportunities to its students across the province. This is the first step towards charter schools, not a way to improve public education.

The issue being addressed in Bill 104 is, how can we best deliver schooling to the children? This is something we know a lot about. It's called pedagogy. We do not

need to reinvent the wheel. The question I'll leave you to answer then is, when we have all this vast knowledge, insight and expertise about how best to educate our children, will we ignore it? Will we sacrifice pedagogy to serve an ideology that is concerned not about children but about the financial bottom line? How is this bill going to serve my child?

In conclusion, I would like you to note that my request to speak at the hearings in Toronto was denied, along with so many other parents, because these hearings are ridiculously short. Parents are concerned about the direction of this government. I'm lucky that I was invited to come to Barrie, that I'm able to come here, so I'm one of the fortunate few who will be heard by this government, a government that has demonstrated time and time again its unwillingness to listen to opposition, to respond to its constituents. I really hope you're hearing me now, because the future of our children is at stake. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you, Mrs Cawthorne. There is no time left for questions.

JANE BRANCHFLOWER

The Vice-Chair: The next presenter is Jane Branchflower. Mrs Branchflower, you have 10 minutes.

Mrs Jane Branchflower: Thank you for this opportunity to address the government on its proposed reform of our school system. Until now, I thought Ontario's school system was like the weather: Everybody complains about it but nobody does anything.

I am an Ontario parent and taxpayer. I am also a former teacher. I have taught in four provinces of Canada. My husband and I spent much of our adult lives living in other parts of Canada. We returned to Ontario eight and a half years ago with our three bilingual children. We expected that they would lose fluency in French but we did not expect that they would become less articulate in English. They came here from a structured system in which they were taught work habits and study skills to one which encouraged them to make lots of noise and have fun.

We are not surprised that Quebec French schools consistently outscore Ontario schools in the international science and math tests, nor were we surprised that our second daughter, having done Ontario's OAC courses, must take first-year engineering at McGill University while her Quebec contemporaries go directly into second-year engineering courses, even though in both provinces students spend the same number of years in school before entering university. Ontario children are not less intelligent or less capable than their Quebec counterparts. Rather, they are victims of a system that encourages sloth and mediocrity.

I think the elimination of the residential education property tax is good. The school tax portion of our property tax bill has climbed annually and now exceeds our total property tax bill of eight and a half years ago by a significant amount. The cost of education must be removed from property taxes. The province must finance education in a rational way. I am tired of paying Harrod's prices for a Wal-Mart education.

1440

In reducing the number of school boards the proposed legislation does not go far enough. I wish you had eliminated school boards completely as New Zealand has done. I did not see in the Fewer School Boards Act any reference to the function of the huge boards, so I do not know how they will be different from the boards we have now.

The education bureaucracy has become a black hole for tax dollars. One clear example of this is the \$15 million spent to create the province-wide grade 3 test when a very good test already exists: the Canadian Test of Basic Skills. That test would objectively test basic curriculum rather than what has been intensively taught in the preceding two weeks. As well, since the boards still can levy business tax in their regions and future governments will be able to increase provincial funding, bureaucracies will flourish as they have in the past. Abolishing boards completely would inhibit such growth.

Some trustees have awarded themselves enormous salaries for what is usually considered community service. Nevertheless, I am not convinced that they, of and by themselves, represent a very big part of the humongous cost of education in Ontario. I was unable to find in the Fewer School Boards Act a description of their duties, nor is there any such description in the existing legislation. This vacuum has allowed school board administrators to develop trustees' job descriptions which tend to benefit the administrators rather than the public. If we must have boards, the act must direct the trustees to perform specified functions so that we all know exactly what their duties are.

Reducing the amount of money spent on education will not negatively affect its quality. A British Columbia study released approximately three years ago by Peter Coleman showed a negative correlation between the amount of money spent on education and student achievement; that is, as dollars increase, achievement decreases.

An article in the February 15, 1997, issue of the Economist discussed spending per student and student-teacher ratios. It stated that a survey of research studies did not support higher spending and lower pupil-teacher ratios. It is obvious that enough money is needed to fund schools. However, Ontario taxpayers pay billions of dollars each year for education. That is more than enough. We must spend our education dollars judiciously. Curtailing education spending is a good move, one that is long overdue.

Accountability must extend to everyone in the education hierarchy, especially the Ministry of Education and Training officials. Teachers have little control over the programs they must use in their classrooms. Unless they are given a detailed curriculum without the limitations currently imposed by circular 14, it is grossly unfair to demand accountability from them.

Too many unsubstantiated methodologies have been inflicted on our children and their teachers with disastrous results. Perhaps if those who control curriculum and programs had their continuing presence at the ministry linked to student performance they would be less eager to embrace the pedagogical flavour of the month. The education of our children is not a game. Those who

would meddle in it must stake their jobs on the outcome: better student achievement. If there's no improvement, there should be no job.

We need a province-wide curriculum that states specifically the skills and content required in each subject at each grade level. There must be no room for misinterpretation or misunderstanding. Universities have had to set up remedial English classes to teach students skills that ought to have been well established in elementary school. Math classes will very probably be next. This is costing the taxpayers too much money. Teachers must understand that their role is to instruct and teach, not facilitate, and that the child's role is to learn.

The composition, election, role and powers of the parent councils must be clearly and precisely defined in the act using language that is directive, that is, "The parent council shall...." The councils must be able to hire and fire the principal, review the school's financial books, approve or reject the annual budget, approve or reject programs and school activities, and assist in developing the discipline policy for the school. Because parents use the school system to educate their children, schools must respond to and reflect the wishes of the parents.

Schools and parental expectations vary. Eliminating school boundaries would enable parents to select a school that is appropriate for their child or children. I encourage the government to enact strong charter school legislation and also devise a voucher system that allows parents to use private schools to educate their children.

Each elementary and secondary school should know what percentage of its students go on to university, college or other post-secondary education as well as what percentage of its students do obtain a secondary school graduation diploma, broken into advanced, general and basic categories by gender.

You have offered ordinary parents like me a welcome chance to help you redesign Ontario's schools. I take heart from the howls of protest emanating from the various factions of the educational establishment. It has been my experience that the more tenuous their claims are, the more vehemently they defend them. Keep up the good work. It will benefit our children. Thank you for this opportunity.

The Vice-Chair: We have less than 30 seconds per caucus for questions. We thank you for your presentation and it will be duly noted.

Mrs Branchflower: I attached some extra documentation at the back.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much. That will be part of the official record.

Mrs McLeod: You don't think we can ask a question in 30 seconds, Mr Chairman?

The Vice-Chair: No, I do not.

VICTORIA COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the Victoria County Board of Education, Sharon Summers, chair. Welcome.

Mrs Sharon Summers: Good afternoon. My name is Sharon Summers and I am chairperson of the Victoria County Board of Education. Joining me today are Judy

Saunders, vice-chairperson, and Bonnie Kennedy, past chairperson of the Victoria County Board of Education.

On behalf of the Victoria County Board of Education and the community we represent, I thank you for the opportunity to share with you our concerns and suggestions on Bill 104. I would like to repeat that the comments today reflect not only the thoughts of the Victoria County Board of Education, but more importantly those also of our community.

Let me state at the outset that we are not here to oppose change nor to speak against restructuring. As responsible elected officials we have already begun the work of meeting with our proposed new partners. We are here to state our case for modifications and revisions that must be made to Bill 104 to ensure that the democratic principles we value are upheld.

In Victoria County we value democracy. We need only watch the nightly news to see that democracy is a concept that must be valued, treasured and protected at all costs. Wars have been fought to protect our democratic rights. Bill 104 gives away the democratic right we have enjoyed in Ontario for well over 100 years: the right to locally elect public school trustees who have the ability to raise revenues through the collection of property taxes.

As I said, that system has served Ontario well for over 100 years. It has adapted to changing times and there is every indication that today's trustees wanted to implement change. In fact, trustees have been finding new ways to do business within the confines of the current Education Act. Individual school boards, including Victoria county's, and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association have made many recommendations and presentations to the provincial government over the past few years requesting changes to the Education Act and to regulations affecting education. Boards expected to receive help from the province in the form of the so-called toolbox. The box wasn't just empty; it didn't arrive.

It is incredibly frustrating to hear the government continually blame school boards for failing to change with the times when it is the province that failed to provide the necessary changes to rules and regulations. While the rest of the world views our education with respect, this government chooses only to find fault. Rather than working with boards, this government chooses to trample on the rights of duly elected officials and is prepared to turn the education system inside out and upside down without any supporting data to suggest this is a logical step to take.

1450

Bill 104 must be based on democratic principles such as the following: the right of appeal; real consultation with all the parties affected; full access by all to the information on which the decisions are based; opportunity for local input; recognition that one size does not fit all — Ontario is a large and diverse province.

Bill 104 gives sweeping powers to a new bureaucracy: the Education Improvement Commission. This commission is accountable only to the provincial cabinet. The Regulations Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act do not apply to the EIC and no decisions made by the commission shall be reviewed or questioned by a court.

This is an unprecedented abuse of democratic principles. These powers of the EIC must be changed. There must be an opportunity to appeal decisions of the EIC.

We recommend, therefore:

That an appeal procedure be implemented through which new information and/or unusual circumstances can be presented.

That all data and records upon which decisions are made be available to the public.

That opportunities be provided for public consultation as the work of the EIC proceeds.

That the local education improvement committees include trustees and staff.

That the Education Improvement Commission be required to provide an annual report to each community showing the projected and actual savings from restructuring, the impact on student achievement and an analysis of the overall impact of restructuring on the economy of the communities affected by such factors as the relocation of board offices and the creation of surplus or redundant staff.

Bill 104 must have accountability built in.

Bill 104 supersedes the rights of current boards to manage their 1997 affairs. While the government has assured us its intent is to facilitate business as usual, we need only to look at the issue of capital projects to see how the proposed new bill inhibits practice as usual, since it states that boards cannot enter into contractual arrangements beyond December 31, 1997, without the commission's approval. Boards do not know how they can proceed with building projects. In Victoria's case, we will need to debenture to fund a much-needed addition to a school. We are in limbo as to our ability to do so.

It is also particularly alarming that the EIC will have the ability to change the board's 1997 budget after it has been democratically approved by the locally elected school board. Victoria county has a history of consulting with its community during the budget process and we question the right of the commission to change our decisions. Trustees are elected and, as such, are accountable to their constituents. When you depower elected officials, you depower the community and therefore you devalue the democratic process. Bill 104 strips the powers of trustees and therefore strips the rights of the community.

Any change, but especially major change, requires careful planning, study and consultation, and such a process requires considerable time. Time appears to be a commodity that is in short supply.

The government plans to eliminate all current school boards and set up new district boards effective January 1, 1998. How can proper planning and consultation take place in such a short time? Will the information being presented today have any impact on the legislation when the legislation is expected to be passed in one week's time? Victoria county is unaware of any impact analysis to study the effects on our community, staff or students by the changes imposed by Bill 104.

Victoria County Board of Education, according to the bill, will join with the Muskoka and Haliburton boards of education to become one very large district board. The government has yet to demonstrate that this change will

or will not actually save money or improve the quality of education. The trustees on my board are concerned about the needs of the children of Victoria county. We want to see the facts, not hear the rhetoric.

During the last couple of years, trustees and staff at the Victoria County Board of Education have worked diligently to keep parents and community members aware of the potential changes to education in an effort to inform and to receive feedback. We have heard very clearly from our communities the following messages:

They value local representation and see the reduction of trustees from Victoria as an erosion of their current level of access to the board's decision-making process. In short, they will lose their voice.

They want to see a reduction in the cost of education, particularly as it relates to their local taxation, but they also want to see evidence that the proposed changes will not cause an actual increase in property tax and, equally important, that the quality of education for students in Victoria county will not be in jeopardy.

They do not see school councils filling the void created by less local representation. Representatives of our parent community support parental involvement in schools, but have indicated that they do not want to assume a governing role. As well, the majority of our community who are non-parent ratepayers feel that giving more sweeping powers to parents will prohibit them from being represented in a democratic fashion.

They want to see the financial data to support restructuring.

They do not view local trustee honoraria and travel costs as excessive and frequently commented that this was a Metro issue. They are concerned that the recommendation of a \$5,000 ceiling on trustee honoraria will disqualify many capable and interested individuals from seeking election, and that it indicates the disdain the province has for the role of the trustee.

Many suggested the need to look at only one publicly funded school board.

Victoria county is concerned that completely removing education from the residential tax base will render our community helpless in addressing local needs and protecting students from future funding cuts. Our community members have stated a concern that they will no longer have local control over inadequacies among communities. The education portion of the property tax is a guaranteed fund for education. If this guaranteed funding is lost, Victoria county states that it must be replaced by another guaranteed fund that cannot be removed at the whim of any government.

Victoria county has three student trustees, one from each of our three secondary schools. We have a group of secondary school students who meet with the director on a monthly basis. The students wish to retain this representation. The board finds their input valuable. It will be difficult to retain student input to this degree in an expanded board.

Section 335(3)(f) in the proposed Bill 104 gives the Education Improvement Commission the power to "make recommendations to the minister on how to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards."

Over the past few years the Victoria County Board of Education has taken specific steps to streamline its operations and to recognize efficiencies that can be gained through a balance of non-professional staff and professional staff, and a balance of outsourcing and in-house trained staff. We can demonstrate how we have been able to make substantive savings.

We urge the government not to apply a one-size-fits-all solution by mandating the outsourcing of non-instructional services. We recommend that the government permit boards to demonstrate where alternatives to outsourcing can generate savings and increase efficiencies, as well as improve the quality of instructional program.

Where restructuring has taken place, the result has always been that there are surplus and/or redundant staff. The bill contains no recommendations or guidelines for managing this issue. We recommend that guidelines for managing surplus staff be developed.

Given that municipalities will be asked to take on increased responsibilities and will therefore need to acquire trained staff to assist with its new functions, we recommend that municipalities be required to give first right of refusal to surplus and/or redundant qualified staff displaced through restructuring of boards and that incentives be offered to municipalities to do so.

As well, the Victoria County Board of Education has a concern for the surplus professional staff at both management and teaching levels. Currently, separate school boards have the right through legislation to place certain conditions on individuals who can apply for positions within their systems. Public boards do not have such rights. We recommend therefore that throughout the restructuring period surplus professional staff be granted equal access to positions. This must be done to ensure fair practice and equity as we move through this restructuring period.

Bill 104 puts in place four types of boards — English public, English separate, French public and French separate — with an equal number of separate and public boards, even though public boards have 75% of the students and separate boards have only 25%. Currently, public and separate boards do not work under the same set of rules. That must change.

Let me conclude with a statement made at a recent educational conference by an educator from British Columbia who has just come through a massive restructuring of the system:

"In democratic societies, education is the means by which we protect the public good and ensure the quality of future societies. We are at great risk through the restructuring process of having it become nothing more than a public service."

Don't allow this happen in Ontario.

1500

The Vice-Chair: We have approximately three quarters of a minute left to each caucus. We are now running about a half an hour behind, so I will ask if you'd just like to make a very brief statement or ask a very brief question.

Mr O'Toole: I'm pleased to represent part of the area of Victoria county and I know just how hard the board

does work with limited resources. I've listened very carefully to many of the points you've made. I recognize also the contributions you've made to the Ontario public school association in the past with reference to the tool kit. Many of the things that you said — I don't think one size fits all and I certainly have heard that not only here today but in northern Ontario. I think the government is listening. Thank you for your input.

Mrs McLeod: I wish the government also had the cost impact studies that you've questioned here. You've asked for annual reports. On the savings projected, I'm wondering whether you believe there will be any savings achieved through the amalgamation.

Mrs Summers: We have no indication of any savings.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much for your presentation. You've indicated that there are problems that your board faces as a result of Bill 104 and the Education Improvement Commission with regard to the capital construction and your building projects, yet the minister has said boards shouldn't feel this way; they should just go ahead and debenture. Why the difference?

Mrs Summers: I don't believe we have the right to do that. He may say that, but as we read the legislation, we do not interpret it that way.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much. I'm afraid we've run out of time. That concludes this presentation.

JUDY WATSON

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is Judy Watson. To the members of the committee, we found out just a little while ago that Ms Watson will not be here, that her presentation will be read by Mr Walter Connell.

Mrs McLeod: I have a question of information for the committee. Recognizing that neither the parliamentary assistant nor the research officer is here, so if it could just be noted, I would like to have any and all individual cost analysis impact studies for the individual amalgamations proposed tabled for the committee.

The Vice-Chair: Duly noted.

Mr Walter Connell: Good afternoon. This rendition has been beautifully crafted by Judy Watson, as you outlined, and I'll do my very best to read it as it's intended, unabridged and so on. It's entitled Ready Fire Aim.

Corporations are admitting today that some of them, instead of downsizing and rightsizing effectively, found themselves capsizing. As so often happens in government, just as the private sector is acknowledging that they were wrong to throw away their corporate history and culture, the government decides to copy them. Why is your timing always so wrong? Why can't you learn from the mistakes of others? Odd asking a group of successful politicians those questions. So often it's the kind of thing parents yell at their teenagers.

Which brings me to the whole point of this presentation. As a parent who has two children who successfully graduated from Ontario's public school system and who are now working in professional jobs in Hong Kong, along with thousands of other young Canadians from Ontario and other provinces who work throughout Asia where they are highly respected and highly paid, I am

angry every time our current minister uses some mediocre test results to market his simple-minded notion that our students in Ontario are somehow less well educated than others who scored well on some test that may or may not have been well designed.

The real indicator of how well we educate our children is how well they are doing at about age 25. I can tell you, that generation of our children that age are doing very well indeed, no thanks to either the provincial or federal governments currently in power.

How dare this government decide that everything about our current governance of local school boards is wrong? How dare one politician decide that his fellow politicians are infallible and yet another level of elected officials, namely trustees, are to be distrusted and disempowered because he thinks he knows best. Remember that this is the minister who was caught saying that to speed up change you create a crisis. Remember that this is the minister who killed the funding for JK and adult education. Remember that this is the minister who said that secondary reform was to be in place by September 1997. Remember that this is the minister who thinks we are all so stupid we won't remember any of this, and because of this government's cynical marketing plan he may be right. But O.J. Simpson has taught us that just because you get away with something, it doesn't make it right.

Yes, if everything this minister had said and done up till now had filled us with respect and confidence, then we might well have been convinced that he and his ministry should be trusted with our education dollars and we might even be willing to trust them with effectively merging our school boards. But this minister has never given any of us the evidence that he has any clue about how county and district boards operate. He didn't even seem to know that school boards get elected in November and inaugurated December 1 of that same year. Under this proposed Bill 104, we'll have no one in charge for a month — just one of thousands of details this bill doesn't address.

But we are not to worry, because this minister has all the answers. Just watch him in the House. He has no respect for debate, no respect for members opposite, just smug, smart-aleck quips. He doesn't have to listen to anybody, especially anyone with an education or anyone in education, because he has all the answers. He doesn't have any real respect for education because he didn't need one, and besides, his government is in power and they don't have to listen to anyone. Of course, he does get a little paranoid every once in a while, and then his defence is to yell at the members opposite and tell them they did a worse job than he's doing. I'm sure that's not much comfort for the children who are in our schools today while all this chaos is going on.

Fortunately, trustees and teachers and other workers in our schools carry valiantly on and just hope that this nightmare will soon be over and their dreams of a helpful, caring education system in Ontario will not be lost forever.

Ontario has had a reputation throughout Canada and the world for its education system, thanks to the leadership of its many brilliant education ministers. It seems almost criminal that one minister and one revolting

government have the power to put all that history and reputation at risk, and we all know from corporate example that once a reputation is lost, it's almost impossible to regain.

As one who saw township school trustees amalgamated, when the government of the day took years to consult and organize the local boards effectively, I'm frightened as I watch this bill bulldoze a system that took years to build. Please stop it before it harms all those children in front of it.

Please do not dismiss this request as one that comes from some caveperson averse to change. Positive change is always needed for continuous improvement. But the fundamentals of positive change involve building on the strengths of a system, involving the people affected by the change in the planning and the process, and buy-in of the stakeholders. This minister and this bill start out by offending everyone involved, showing no signs of carefully thought-out plans and demoralizing all those who need to be on board for effective implementation. How can any thinking human being be optimistic in a situation like this?

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your attention and here's hoping you can stop Bill 104. It is hard to unring the bell.

1510

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate the brief and I appreciate your being here to present it. I am not sure if you feel comfortable answering questions on it on either your own behalf or Ms Watson's behalf, but I'm sensitive to the frustration that's in the brief and sensitive to the concern about how difficult it will be to undo what is being done if it proves to be devastating for kids.

I guess I'm most concerned with the statement at the top of the second page where she says she hopes the "nightmare will soon be over and their dreams of a helpful, caring education system in Ontario will not be lost forever." I'm truly afraid about what this is going to bring at the end of the day, but in the short term the sheer chaos that it's going to bring to our children, and I just wonder if you or Ms Watson see any potential benefits that can be derived from this to make up for what will be absolute chaos in the next few years.

Mr Connell: I can see that we can learn to gird our loins as we've never had to gird our loins before. When this is over, we'll be better equipped to deal with a crisis such as we haven't seen yet. I thank you for the compliment too, because if I brought the sensitivity that Judy has written into this to you, I would consider that a compliment that I presented it in the way she meant it.

Ms Lankin: It's a fantastic brief, it's a fantastic capturing of sentiment, and it's one that I hope to be able to use in the Legislature so that other people in the province can hear it.

Do you have any thoughts of your own that you want to add to this process? I'll just give you the time.

Mr Connell: Thank you very much, Frances. I have a concern for this one. It seems to trample on the rights of the public boards. I mentioned this to the minister at an OPSBA conference not too long ago, this business of confederation. We can go one way on this street and we can't do anything to the separate board, we can't take

anything away from them, but it doesn't matter if the rights of the public board are trampled upon. We're in that dilemma. We're wondering where the equality or the equity in this business is.

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): Mr Connell used to write some of my speeches in the Legislature, but they weren't quite as forceful as this one.

Mr Connell: Sure they were, Al.

The Vice-Chair: That uses up our time. Thank you very much, sir, for your presentation.

Ms Lankin: Just in response to Mr McLean's interjection, I would like to offer to him that if he would like to read this into the record of the Legislature I'll forgo the opportunity and I'll give it to him.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you, Ms Lankin. We're already half an hour behind.

You've just had distributed a document that's been done by research with respect to the background on the Hornepayne Board of Education and the Hornepayne Roman Catholic Separate School Board. Did you want to address that?

Mr Ted Glenn: Yes, please. If you have any additional questions about the Hornepayne board, I have a 20-page backgrounder on much more specific things. If you'd like to come and have a look at that, you're welcome.

The Vice-Chair: We'll address the Hornepayne resolution later in the day.

ROY PALUOJA

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is Roy Paluoja. You have 10 minutes.

Mr Roy Paluoja: I would like to begin by giving you a little bit about my background. English is my third language. I attended all my high school in the city of North York, both my children were born in North York and I have been a resident of Scarborough for 20 years. Currently I am teaching at a community college in North York, and I have been for 17 years. In addition to that, I have been president of Human Services of Scarborough, which is a volunteer position. My wife and I have two daughters; one is currently in grade 9; the other is in grade 12 and has completed two OACs. For the last six years I have been involved with the parent councils at my daughters' schools, being the senior public school and the high school.

Up until last year, my wife's family owned a cottage in Simcoe county and had been taxpayers in respect to Simcoe county. The reason I'm here today is because I was concerned about the rhetoric that is going on right now and a lot of the misinformation that is being disseminated by the various teachers' unions, by the various groups saying they represent parents. The information, if you are to believe it, at the last meeting that I attended in Scarborough — which was brought together by the head of the music department at the Scarborough Board of Education for parents that were concerned about losing their music program — if you were to believe what was stated that day, today is the day that the bill was going to pass through the Legislature. Of course, this was another tactic that was being used to stifle public input. Well, here I am at this meeting. When I pointed this particular

item out, I asked him specifically, "Where did you hear this?" "Oh, I've been told this."

If you are to believe everything that is being stated right now, everything is going to disappear off the table. We're going to lose French immersion. My daughter just completed OAC credit in French immersion. We are going to lose all our swimming pools. We are going to lose all ESL. I don't buy into any of that rhetoric that is going on right now. It has infuriated me that this position is being brought forward as being a position of the parents of Ontario.

I attended a meeting that was put on by the ministry on secondary school reform, and I was lucky enough at my table to actually go to the microphone and bring forward the position that had been discussed at the table. I asked a very simple question: How many people in the audience are teachers? You should have seen the reaction. People got really angry at me because I was suggesting that somehow or other they did not have a right to speak. I'm a teacher. I felt really disgusted by the actual reaction that occurred there. This is not a discussion to be held by teachers and only teachers. It is not to be a discussion held only by parents who happen to have access to various trustees. This is a discussion that needs to be made and done between the stakeholders.

I firmly believe that Bill 104 is the beginning of a needed reform in the education system. I have felt for quite some time that the trustees do not listen to what you are saying. The outs want to be in, and they campaign on that basis. Once they get in they, all of a sudden, revert back to exactly the same way as the previous trustees were.

I firmly believe we need to have this reform take place. This is a start. We need to reduce the number of school boards. It seems to me that we need to do this to get the dollars back into the classroom. I commend the government for introducing this bill. I believe it is needed, it is a first step and I wish them success.

Ms Lankin: Thank you for coming and for your presentation today. I understand from what you've put forward that there are certain groups that you think have painted themselves as representing parents that perhaps may not be a legitimate voice of all parents. But over the course of these hearings we have had representatives from parent school councils come forward. This is the body in place now that this bill purports to push certain decision-making down to. What I've taken from what they've said is that whether or not they believe in fewer school boards — that's almost a separate issue — they believe that stripping elected trustees of decision-making power with respect to the education system, burying it in the bureaucracy of the Ministry of Education and pushing some tough decisions down to the parent level, where they think they're not ready to take them on, actually isn't going to improve the way in which decisions are made around the education system.

You talked about getting that money out of bureaucracy and putting it back into the classroom. They fear that the minister has said there's going to be another \$1 billion in cuts and that nothing's coming back to the classroom. Do you think those voices are legitimate representations of parents' concerns?

1520

Mr Paluoja: You've raised a number of issues there. First, I firmly believe that as parent councils evolve, the role will change. I think there is a legitimacy with respect to them wanting to have a role, and a real role, on parent councils.

The Acting Chair (Mr Bill Grimmett): I'm sorry, we'll have to move on to the next question.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): I'd like to continue on the line of the parent councils. Bill 104 asks the Education Improvement Commission to look at strengthening the role of the parents in parent councils. Could you give us any suggestions how parent councils could be involved, what they should be involved in? Could you give us your thoughts on that?

Mr Paluoja: I think they should be undertaking their mandate of being in a capacity where they will act as a board in the sense that a board of directors acts. When I was on Human Services of Scarborough, we didn't run Human Services of Scarborough; we acted as a board. The day-to-day operation of the school should be the legitimate purview of the principal, but I think there is a need for input there.

Mrs McLeod: This is the eighth day on which I've been present at the hearings and we've heard from a great number of parents. I'm disturbed by your suggestion that the people who have come before the committee "say" they are representing parents. I would suggest to you that they don't just say they are representing parents; they are. The parent councils that have come to us have been represented by their chairs. They often represent groups of parent councils. They have often come to the committee with surveys of all their parent councils and in some cases they have even come before us with surveys of their entire school communities. In many cases, because the community was too distant from where we were holding our hearings for individuals to appear, they've made the effort to survey members of their community.

I would suggest it really does a disservice to these parents to suggest that they are only "saying" they represent parents. They are as independent as I believe you are in coming forward today, but they are most certainly representative. I just wonder on what basis you would dismiss the representative nature of their presentations.

Mr Paluoja: Because I think they've been captured by the bureaucracies within their particular schools with disinformation that has been a program and that has been undertaken by the unions and by the principals.

The Acting Chair: Mr Paluoja, thank you for coming forward today and representing your views.

ENDA MAGUIRE

The Acting Chair: The next delegation is Mr Enda Maguire. You have 10 minutes to make your presentation. If there's time at the end, we'll have questions.

Mr Enda Maguire: It's quite short. A careful reading of Bill 104 makes it clear that this bill is intended, first, to perform a massive tightening of the ministry's control over the power of school boards to spend taxpayers' money as they see fit; second, it encourages greater

involvement by parents and eliminates the enormous conflict of interest that exists in the election and appointment of trustees; as well, by removing power from trustees and administrators, Bill 104 will make it easier to introduce further changes and reforms to this bloated system of education in Ontario.

Looking at the overall state of the semi-autonomous bodies in Ontario, bodies supported by taxpayers of the province, one cannot help wondering if the traditional notion of allowing these bodies to set their own budgets, including wage scales, will have to be changed.

For example, the Toronto Transit Commission — I'm digressing slightly here — built the first subway in Canada in the 1950s at a cost of \$234 million. On completion, there was no increase in property taxes, no increase in fares, no deficit. Today the TTC can't buy five buses without asking the province for assistance. Ontario Hydro is \$33 billion in debt, workers' compensation is \$13 billion in debt and so on.

Public education in Ontario is by far the largest of the publicly supported bodies and it is and continues to be the most out of control in regard to costs and expenses. The cost of education in Ontario exceeds the cost of the armed services for all of Canada: \$13 billion versus \$10 billion. Every year since the mid-1960s, school board budgets have increased and the wages paid to teachers etc have increased steadily regardless of the cost-of-living index or the rate of inflation, this despite the fact that the larger boards have had increased assessment to draw upon. Where I live, education represents 70% of our property taxes.

Stories abound concerning the waste and extravagance in the operation of school boards. Bill 104 is a wonderful start to reforming the system of public education in Ontario. Once the financial side of things is brought under control, the minister and his staff can concentrate on the abysmal state of the quality of public education in Ontario.

Finally, I'm sure you will all feel better when you know that the director of education of the Peel Board of Education, in his 1995-96 budget, made the following allowances: For books and periodicals to help him understand the Education Act, he spent \$4,780; micro-ficheing \$2,186; and the one I like best, for recognition dinners for community representatives, retirements, receptions for parent volunteers, student awards, directors' breakfasts and exchange student luncheons, he spent \$60,000. He also spent \$1,000 on consumables, whatever they are; he spent \$201 on repairs, whatever that is; on board functions he spent \$15,000; and on discretionary and special projects consisting of donations, memorials, planning sessions, special projects, videos, framing etc, business-related expenses, he spent \$10,000. Finally, he spent \$1,000 on two chairs for his office. I think that brief little bit out of the Peel Board of Education's budget document tells all we need to know about the waste in the system.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you, sir. You've used up your time. We appreciate your coming forward today.

Mr Wildman: The Peel board isn't affected by this legislation.

The Vice-Chair: Mr Wildman, the time is up.

METRO TORONTO MOVEMENT FOR LITERACY

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy, Betty Butterworth, Lloyd Pike and Jane Larimer. Welcome. You have 15 minutes in total for your presentation.

Ms Betty Butterworth: Members of the committee, I'd like to introduce the three of us. Jane Larimer is the staff person in the movement who works with and liaises with government, among other things. Lloyd Pike and I are co-chairs of the Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy. I worked for many years in the provincial government in adult basic education and immigrant services, and when I retired two years ago was asked to run for the board of MTML. Lloyd has been involved for many years and is a student who has been through programs in a community literacy organization, a life skills course in George Brown College, and is currently taking courses from the Independent Learning Centre with support from the Metropolitan Separate School Board.

The Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy, known as MTML, is the largest of 19 literacy networks across Ontario. Our membership includes all the publicly funded organizations which deliver literacy and basic skills training to adults in the Metro Toronto and York regions. That includes colleges, school boards, community groups, libraries and others. We also provide many of our services to Peel region in collaboration with the Peel Adult Learning Network.

Our organization has existed for 20 years and over that time has evolved to provide a variety of services for our members and to coordinate provincial government initiatives which will improve programs for adult learners in the region. Most of our ongoing program funding comes from the Ministry of Education and Training, while the province negotiates with the National Literacy Secretariat to provide most of our funding for short-term initiatives and projects.

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MTML operates a hotline for potential learners or intermediaries to provide information about literacy; English as a second language, or ESL; upgrading; adult basic education; basic skills and basic employability skills programs in the region. We are the busiest such hotline in Canada.

Our preparatory training program, or PTP — the Minister of Education attended an open house today and spoke with students and others; we're honouring students over the past four years who have gone through the program — is an integrated basic skills and employment preparation program to help unemployed workers with gaps in basic skills get back into the workforce or into training which will lead to sustainable employment. MTML also houses the southern Ontario coordinator for the workplace employment and basic skills program. This service can assist employers to connect to local delivery agents in their area if they want to mount a workplace program. We're also involved in practitioner training for people working in adult literacy in all sectors.

Perhaps most important, MTML works through its five local literacy committees in Metro Toronto and York

region to assess needs and coordinate training by all the delivery agencies in each area so that adult learners have access to the programs which will help them achieve their basic learning goals and then move smoothly to further training, education and employment. This initiative aims to make the most effective and efficient use of resources.

The target group we define for literacy is essentially the adults identified as being at levels 1 and 2 in the seven-country International Adult Literacy Survey, or IALS, conducted in 1994 and reported on in the 1995 StatsCan publication *Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada*. The study demonstrated a strong link between literacy and a country's economic potential.

Three literacy domains were defined and tested with a sample of adults. They were prose literacy, document literacy and quantitative literacy. There were five proficiency levels established, each covering a range of scores on a scale from zero to 500. Some 20% of Ontario adults between 16 and 69 fell into level 1 and 24% into level 2. This compared with the Canadian average for level 1 of 17% and level 2 of 26%. Just in contrast, the averages for Sweden were 7% for level 1 and 19% for level 2.

Literacy is closely associated with educational attainment. Fewer than 10% of secondary school graduates were at level 1. The largest number of those with secondary school education were at level 3, the next largest at level 2. The gains in literacy for people moving from secondary graduation to post-secondary graduation were not as large as those for people moving from less than secondary graduation to secondary graduation. This result implies that investments in training at the lower end of the literacy spectrum are very worthwhile.

Why do some aspects of Bill 104 and related financial proposals concern us? It is out of our work to increase the literacy skills of Ontario adults that we are presenting this brief on behalf of adult learners who participate in the programs currently available across Metro Toronto. We feel these programs are threatened by the proposed legislation's lack of attention to adults and by the lack of representation which people in our community will have with the new approach to school board governance.

In Metro Toronto, it was often the full-time trustees who took the time to meet with people evenings and weekends, often with interpreters, to become knowledgeable about their needs and concerns. Out of their leadership and direction to staff, the school boards in Metro Toronto have developed a truly broad and comprehensive range of services for adults. The province built on initiatives in the school boards when developing its own policies.

We understand that currently 88 trustees serve Metro Toronto. We do not believe that 22 part-time trustees paid \$5,000 a year each to lead the largest school board in Canada will be able to provide the level of responsiveness needed. How will they ensure the successful integration of people from very different backgrounds into our community? We don't think, when hard choices about how trustees spend their limited time are made, that adult services will receive their attention.

The proposed parent councils may work to make schools accountable for the education of children and youth, but we do not believe they will contribute to the

quality of adult education. A well-connected system of diverse program opportunities in multiple delivery systems is needed for adults.

Currently, the public school boards in Metro Toronto are by far the largest providers of adult literacy programming in the region, but unlike all the other programs, which are funded by the provincial government, Metro Toronto school boards provide all their literacy services from municipal tax dollars. Unlike adult high school credit courses and ESL, which are paid for through the municipality but which are at least recognized by the ministry under the general legislative grants, or GLGs, although at a lesser amount than is actually spent by the public boards in Metro, spending for adult basic literacy by these school boards does not show up in provincial records anywhere. The same applies to the Ottawa Board of Education.

This anomaly results from a decision of the previous government, as part of the expenditure control plan of 1993, to transfer literacy funding out of the GLGs to the then Ontario Training and Adjustment Board and at the same time reduce the funding by over 50%. To reduce the impact of this decision on programs and learners across the province, OTAB made the decision at that time not to begin funding the school boards, which would not have been eligible previously for direct funding from the province. It also spread the cuts across the whole system, that is, all deliverers, and initiated regional planning by all literacy programs, such as that done by MTML, to make better use of existing resources.

According to an article in the Toronto Star last year, public school boards were denying adult students access to courses they needed, and only a quarter of adults were finding these courses elsewhere. Only the Ottawa Board of Education and Metro Toronto school boards were an exception and continued to provide adult services at a level which came closer to meeting the need. If learning opportunities are lost through a shift in priorities by a new amalgamated school board or through the move to provincial funding, there is no possibility of the college or community sectors picking up those affected. Both have had waiting lists for years and serve different needs.

The total spent for literacy and basic skills programs by the province is approximately \$59 million. The North York, Scarborough, Etobicoke and Toronto school boards spend \$5.4 million on adult basic literacy, not including any overhead for schools. The \$5.4 million includes the amount of \$240,000 which the Toronto board transfers to its community partners. There is no possibility that the students from closures of these public school board programs could be accommodated by other deliverers in Metropolitan Toronto, including four colleges, the Metropolitan Separate School Board, Metro Labour Education Centre, 21 community groups and the PTP, which receive in total about \$9.1 million from ministry.

If the \$5.4 million in Metro plus the approximately \$1 million spent by the Ottawa Board of Education were found within the existing provincial budget for literacy, it would take the equivalent of funding for 95 community groups across the province out of the system.

As Ontario Works allows basic education as an eligible program under the employment support component, and

40% of those currently enrolled in school board programs, 48% of those in colleges and 15% of those in community programs are on social assistance, it would be short-sighted to compromise these programs in any way.

Similarly, all levels of government are concerned about youth unemployment: 23% of those in college and community programs and 19% of those in school board literacy programs are under 25. In Ontario 30% of youth drop out of high school, but subsequently 50% of drop-outs return to get their diplomas. A substantial number of these students gain the confidence to go on with credit courses, often in the adult system, by first attending a basic literacy program.

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There is no mention of adult programming in the current bill or in the description of the Education Improvement Commission. In fact, one restriction on school board powers for this year would make it especially difficult to operate school board adult programs: It is that the "board shall not...appoint a person to a position, hire an new employee, or promote an existing employee." If this applies to the hiring of continuing education staff, it would make it difficult to run an adult program in which staff are hired and placed to meet the needs of adult customers as those needs arise.

There is also a clause related to outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards, which may or may not affect adult education. Is adult basic education considered non-instructional as it lies outside the regular K-to-12 system? With the increasing complexity of teaching to meet the new economic realities, the possibility that school boards would have to contract out such services as adult basic education is a concern. There is a proven track record in this area by school boards and their ABE staff, many of whom are experienced teachers.

We know that children who do not have literacy in their homes are severely disadvantaged at school. To some extent junior kindergarten can make up for this disadvantage. Both adult literacy programs and JK can thus be seen as preventive measures.

We are concerned about the possible demise of publicly funded JK in Metro Toronto when the province controls the purse strings. We also fear its continuation may be at the expense of adult programs. We have to be concerned about any decisions which would increase the likelihood of adding to the number of people who leave school early because they can't cope, or end up without the required reading, writing and literacy skills. We believe that ending JK would have a negative effect on Ontario's education levels in the future.

MTML believes that provincial reform of education coupled with the devolution of adult training to the province provides unique opportunities for defining a coherent adult education and training policy in Ontario.

There is an opportunity for the Ontario Government to develop a comprehensive, accessible, articulated and integrated system of adult education and training as part of the reform of education. MTML would like to participate in a broad consultation, along with others, to provide input to an adult education policy. The current bill is titled An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system.

At a minimum we trust that in your review of Bill 104 you will pay attention to the important role school boards play in adult education in Ontario; do nothing to jeopardize that role or the quality and effectiveness of the programs; and ensure that adult programming is explicitly recognized in any legislation, subsequent regulations and financial agreements or decisions.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you. We have six seconds left, so there will be no time for questions. Your presentation was very thoughtful. We're very grateful. I'll entertain a question for information.

Mrs McLeod: I was concerned to realize that the figures for the Ottawa and Metropolitan Toronto adult basic literacy programs do not appear in separate provincial records. I would ask whether or not the figures that are given to us by the ministry showing the annual operating costs of education in the province — those are the total figures we've been using to get some understanding of what spending is now going on — would include the full cost of adult basic literacy programs in both Metropolitan Toronto and Ottawa.

Mr Skarica: I imagine they would.

Mr Wildman: I have another question for the Ministry. I have a document here entitled Excellence in Education: Ontario's Plan for Reform, Better-Educated Students for a Brighter Future, printed by the Queen's Printer this year. It deals with the government's agenda on education. The last part of it deals with bill 104 and the government's interpretation of it. I would like to know how many of these were printed, how they were distributed, how many were distributed and at what cost to the Ministry of Education.

Interjection.

Mr Wildman: No, it talks about the plan for education.

The Vice-Chair: We'll have your question responded to.

COALITION FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is Marilyn Dolmage, the Coalition for Inclusive Education.

Ms Marilyn Dolmage: First I'll introduce Matthew Strang, and he'll introduce the others.

Mr Matthew Strang: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. As you know, I'm Matthew Strang. I attend Patrick Fogarty Secondary School, which is a Catholic school. We have inclusion there and we really enjoy it. Jennifer Strang is my sister and Marita Cowan is a fellow student at PF.

We're here representing all these groups. I'll just list them quickly: Down Syndrome Association of Ontario, Family Alliance Ontario, Integration Action Group, Ontario and Canadian Associations for Community Living, People First Ontario and Youth Involvement Ontario, otherwise known as YIO. I'm a mid-northern representative for YIO and I've been in the group for a whole year now. Marita's been in it for I think three years and Jennifer's been in it for two years.

I've talked about Bill 104 with all my students and our point is that inclusion's the best way to go. It's cheaper than segregation, and segregation is really expensive

compared to inclusion. It not only benefits the segregated students, it benefits everyone. They're all getting more out of it. They're being able to be with not just regular people but other people who have differences from them. I think that's everything.

Ms Dolmage: We perhaps need to define inclusive education because it's used fairly loosely across Ontario. I think our major point today is that there's been very much a situation of inequality across the province, very dependent on the individual school boards' directions in special education, and left to the discretion of principals and the sometimes outdated attitudes of principals. That's why I brought some young people with me today, because I think they point to a different kind of future.

Inclusion means that all students, any students, receive support to learn in a regular classroom as members of the regular classroom, not just there part-time or in and out; membership being very important, participating fully in the neighbourhood school. Inclusion cannot happen in a school that is not your neighbourhood school.

Unfortunately, some school boards have defined neighbourhood different for Jennifer, for example, as opposed to her brother Matthew, and that splits families and splits communities and leads us in the wrong direction. Many of us and our family members and friends have been hurt by segregation. A lot of energy has gone into fighting for rights that others take for granted. Slowly, though, some change has occurred and we see a very different future ahead of us.

The coalition includes people with disabilities who themselves have suffered through segregated education, many of whom are now learning in adult literacy programs and now ask what happened for all those years they were in school. Since the early 1980s huge empires of special education have been built by school boards across Ontario, some more than others. It's a very expensive system to maintain a whole segregated system, a special system and a regular system. We're advocating the merger of those two.

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Some school boards in Ontario put all their resources into regular classroom supports. One province of Canada, New Brunswick, has shown the leadership to make sure that the only option considered for students is regular class and all the energy goes into a range of supports rather than a range of placements that remove children from their neighbourhoods and their brothers and sisters.

The policy presently in Ontario, as stated by this Minister of Education and previous ministers, is "The integration of exceptional pupils should be the normal practice of Ontario, when such a placement meets the pupil's needs and is in accordance with parental wishes." Unfortunately, the system we now have does not really look at students' needs. It looks at labels and it does not take parental wishes into account.

Recently, there has been the decision regarding Emily Eaton at the Supreme Court of Canada. The Ministry of Education and the school board told the Supreme Court that Emily Eaton was receiving support in the regular class. They also said the policy is that should happen to most students in Ontario. But parental wishes were not really observed in that case. We've been waiting since

1994 for changes in regulation 305 which would force school boards once a year to really look at students' needs at identification placement review committees and evaluate how to return students to regular class after specialized placement, and would rebalance the decision-making so that parents have an equal say.

We are members of Youth Involvement Ontario. We have been consultants to schools now in Ontario since 1995 because of the building inclusive schools project, of which I am the coordinator. We're working with elementary and secondary schools, public and separate systems. We have a number of schools that are demonstrating best practices, so they're leaders, ready to share their ideas with others. We're looking at large cities, northern, southern, small communities, quite a range. That expertise is available to other schools should the ministry direct schools to include students in regular class.

While we're not here today to look at all the impact of amalgamating school boards, we have concerns about the role of parent committees and of special education advisory committees, now and in the new system. We're concerned that some boards create supports and some don't. We certainly hope the amalgamated boards move in the positive direction for students.

We're asking that if the Education Improvement Commission has the opportunity, it should gather information about the wide disparity in special education practices across the province. Our groups have been waiting a long time for some leadership from the province in this regard. At the moment families have to sometimes change religion, they have to move, they have to take on expensive legal battles or they despair of opportunities for their students. Regular class supports exist in a few schools, but it is not the normal practice in Ontario, especially for students with certain disabilities like developmental disabilities.

We're asking the Education Improvement Commission to do some fact-finding and find out which boards have segregated schools, which are very costly such as one we heard about recently in Ottawa; what are the rates of special class placement; what are the rates of identification of students, because right now in school boards across Ontario huge amounts of money are spent in meetings to just determine labels for students and placements, and not to discuss classroom supports.

We have information from the Hamilton Board of Education that it costs them three times as much to support a special education student in a segregated class as it does to support the average special education student in a regular classroom. So we're very angry that families are still being told there is no money for regular class support, integration inclusion, when the other costs considerably higher.

We think this is a great opportunity to have an overview of the excessive costs of segregation. We also know from our own experience, and these students could speak further to that, that inclusive education is better education, not just for students with exceptionalities, who have better role models and who are learning academics when they weren't learning those things in life skills classes, but also for other students who have learned how to be leaders, how to value each other in a very positive way.

The other request we have is that this opportunity for restructuring means that at last regulation 305 will be enacted, which will force school boards to consider parental wishes fairly as they make decisions about students. We're asking that segregation be curtailed, that there be a good hard look at placement decisions for students. At present it is very easy for school boards to support parents who want segregated placements, but those families who are requesting what has proven to be a better education and a more cost-effective education in the regular classroom are being penalized, at great cost to the system.

We're asking that this opportunity for restructuring schools ensure someone looks across the province at school board practices and ensures there are opportunities for exceptional students in regular classrooms. Maybe Marita and Jennifer can just speak for a minute about what Youth Involvement is and why they are consultants, for example, to the building inclusive schools project, what they want people to hear.

Ms Marita Cowan: Jen and I are both members of Youth Involvement. We're also good friends at the same school. The reason we're good friends is because we're in the same classes. I don't think we would have the same friendship if we didn't have the same classes. We're both 17; we go to classes together; we do activities together; we're in clubs together. Unless inclusion is active in the school, that opportunity isn't as welcome to students who have labels. I personally don't have a label that any doctor has labelled me with. My parents label me stubborn.

Since I don't have a medical disability or developmental disability, I benefit from inclusion because I get the whole view of society and school and friendships. I was just going to ask Jen if she can answer this too because she has been labelled with a disability.

What do you prefer? Would you rather be in a classroom or in a segregated classroom? A segregated classroom is one that is with just the resource room. Would you like to be in a classroom, or do you like to be in a resource room?

Ms Jennifer Strang: A classroom.

Ms Cowan: So what's better about the classroom?

Ms Strang: I don't know.

Ms Cowan: Do you like to do work?

Ms Strang: Yes.

Ms Cowan: Do you learn more in the classroom?

Ms Strang: Yes.

Ms Cowan: Do you have more friends in the classroom?

Ms Strang: Yes.

Ms Cowan: If she's in the classroom, then she has people she can do all her other activities with. She's in Youth Involvement. We get together and do social things, just like anyone else would do after school.

There are some things in Bill 104 we are in favour of. We've discussed it. We have meetings and we like to talk about political things that in a lot of cases we don't understand. One thing we just want everyone to be aware of is that inclusion is a good thing, and if a school board hasn't tried it, not to knock it if they haven't tried it, and if you have tried it, not to knock it because it's good.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you all very much for joining us today. We have a little under a minute left for each caucus so I'll entertain very brief comments. We begin with the official opposition, Ms McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: It will be very brief.

One of our earlier presenters today was asked whether or not he or she supported the same funding for every student in the name of something that was equitable. Would the same funding for every student be equitable for students who are looking towards an inclusive education?

Ms Dolmage: We would be very concerned if funding was tied to some disability label. We think the type of educational supports do not always depend on the needs of the student, but also on the needs of the teacher and the organization of the school. We prefer the system that exists now where funding is based on a total per capita enrolment at the school board, but we ask for some leadership and we think school boards haven't been looking carefully enough at where that money's being spent. We think there should be some overview.

Mr Wildman: Are you worried that in amalgamated boards there will be less willingness to have inclusion, or do you think it will make much difference one way or the other?

Ms Dolmage: It all depends on provincial leadership. There has to be provincial leadership. With the current system, there is none, and we don't have any guarantees from one board to another. We are concerned that we could have all Brant county boards that go to all kinds of lengths to oppose that. We're carefully saying that more students could be supported with the same amount of money. We must really safeguard that there are not cuts.

Mr McLean: I just want to say to Mrs Dolmage I'm pleased to know that you had the opportunity to come today, for the members to hear what you've been telling me for some time. That's what it's all about and I'm happy to say that your presentation was well put.

Matthew, that term as a page at Queen's Park certainly helped you out. You've done a great job. Thank you for being here.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you all very much.

To members of the committee, we are running approximately half an hour behind schedule, which will cut into our recess. I understand there's an opportunity for you to slip out and make calls or have a meal in that time, so I just want you to be aware now that I will try to make up a portion of that time in what we have scheduled as our recess, because we are already scheduled to go quite late.

1600

ONTARIO COALITION FOR BETTER CHILD CARE

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, Laurel Rothman, council member.

Ms Laurel Rothman: You all look tired, like you've been listening, so I'll tell you a little bit about the coalition briefly and then I want to ask a question. Probably most of you are aware we've been around since 1981. We're a group of parents, child care workers, child care programs, local child care coalitions, trade unions,

women's groups and interested individuals. For a long time, we've advocated for a range of high-quality, affordable child care and early childhood education services. We've monitored successive governments in their various efforts to respond to public pressure for high-quality early childhood education.

I want to ask a question: How many committee members are parents? Okay. How many committee members have ever used high-quality early childhood education in the form of kindergarten? Okay. How many members have ever used licensed, high-quality early childhood education in the form of child care? Okay.

Ms Lankin: What about having worked in it?

Ms Rothman: Having worked there certainly counts.

Mr Wildman: And junior kindergarten?

Ms Rothman: I used the term "junior kindergarten" broadly to include that for both four-year-olds and five-year-olds. I asked the question because it's always important to remember how terminology affects things. I guess we would say high-quality early childhood education delivered in kindergarten classrooms and delivered in licensed child care programs is very similar. That's why I have to underline "high-quality," and that goes for both interpretations of how you deliver it.

What I want to say is, in our looking at the themes of what's happened to early childhood in Ontario, say since 1981, there are a couple of common themes that have served to strengthen and expand what I'll call the fragile network of child care/early childhood services. One was a decision made actually as far back as the Davis government to use capital funding directed only to the non-profit sector — obviously that goes without saying for school boards; it doesn't go without saying for child care programs — and also to recognize the neighbourhood school as the logical home and location for licensed child care services. It meets many families' needs. I should say that includes part-day services, full-day services and, in a few instances, extended-hour services. Not a lot; we haven't come that far.

I want to note two particular policies that have served families across the province. The reason I'm going to note them is because they're missing, they're gone, and we're quite concerned that under Bill 104 the remnants of some gains that we've made for Ontario families in receiving early childhood education are further going to disappear.

One particular policy was the New Directions policy the Liberals initiated — I can't remember if it was in 1987 or 1988 — where there was a requirement that a child care centre be built in every new school. That resulted in at least 10,000 new licensed child care spaces. That's everywhere, and when you go up to Thunder Bay, you'll hear from people in remote and rural areas, people who want — I was interested to listen to the literacy people on inclusive education. Child care is very much the foundation. It's also an important ramp for women's equality, it's a support to employment and it certainly is a key measure to help fight child poverty. I guess what we want to see is that that core remains and it remains in one place, not divided up in two or three places, so that we have kids in a neighbourhood come together and be able to learn together.

Subsequently, the Rae government built upon the partnership with schools and undertook the greatest expansion and fee subsidies through the Jobs Ontario program. Those 14,000 subsidies helped parents, some young and some not, participate in training programs. Many of those were secondary and post-secondary students and also some were social assistance recipients who were able to voluntarily enter the paid labour force. There was an important recognition that high-quality child care needs to be affordable, not only to families but to our municipal partners, and those subsidies were provided at 100% of the cost.

I'll try to be brief.

The Rae government also underlined the importance of early childhood education by requiring school boards to provide junior kindergarten. I think I have to point out that broad-based, whether we want to call it polling of public opinion or the actual enrolment of parents in child care shows that many families, in fact the vast majority of families in this province, have utilized junior kindergarten when it has been there, so I think there is some evidence for strong support for universally accessible early childhood education.

I guess had the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Learning gone forward, we would have seen our services move in the direction of the way the European Community operates. Instead, what we're seeing is the direction of moving towards the way the US operates in very much a market-driven system. We've seen those Jobs Ontario subsidies go back to the cost-sharing of 80-20, and indeed a survey that we did showed we have lost 9,000 fee subsidies in this province. That means that for lots of parents, usually mothers on social assistance, who want to enter the workforce, the lack of affordable child care will be a tremendous barrier.

The other major concern to us is that for the first time in Canada, not just Ontario, this government is introducing capital funding to the commercial, for-profit child care sector. We have concerns about what that means for quality child care.

The impact of Bill 104 threatens to wipe out a number of those gains that have been made in concert with local communities and school boards. Currently, 40% of licensed group child care spaces are located in neighbourhood schools. They serve kids in that location and sometimes they serve kids in the neighbouring neighbourhood. Those programs operate parallel, let's call them — some boards call them "parallel use." Often they get support in the form of either no rent or low rent. They often share services. They may join a bulk buying program. It's not only an important support to neighbourhoods and families but a support to the programs.

Our concern is that with Bill 104 taking away the authority of the local boards through elected trustees to develop programs that local communities want and need, we don't know what will happen to child care. There'll be virtually no ability to levy local funds and it will be difficult for boards to meet specific local needs.

I also think the lack of any policy about what's going to be the funding formula by which school boards will be bound raises many questions: What will the provincial education grant pay for? Will boards that want to con-

tinue to provide junior kindergarten be able to? What will happen to the hundreds of child care programs in schools with no security of space or support? The minute enrolment goes up, is the child care program out the door? There's nowhere else to go and there's nowhere else to get funding to provide a space.

For example, in the most recent capital allocation, the \$58 million includes no funding for child care in many fast-growing areas with young families. What about the child care programs in old schools that are being rebuilt? We know that in Metropolitan Toronto alone, as well as Ottawa, Windsor and London, there are programs, at least six of them in Metro, where child care programs have been in the local public school for at least 15 years. The building is over 50 years old, it's being rebuilt, and there's no way to replace the child care, so we're going to lose it. There's nowhere else to go. A non-profit board cannot, even if they thought they could pay it off, get a loan to build or renovate a space.

So while, as I understand it, local schools are going to be expecting more input from parent volunteers, the same schools may be forced to withdraw support from child care, which is very much a volunteer-led, although professionally serviced, program. Parent boards run and fund-raise for those programs all along. That seems to me a real contradiction.

What we're really saying is we urge you to send Bill 104 back to the drawing board, abolish the plan to amalgamate local school boards, and we call upon you to maintain your supports to child care programs in schools and restore the capital funding for child care and junior kindergarten programs.

We're also taking the formal opportunity to request a meeting with Minister Snobelen to discuss these recommendations. We have not been successful in obtaining that meeting to date, and I haven't really had much time to talk about the importance of early childhood education. Maybe we can get to that.

1610

The Acting Chair (Mr Arnott): Thank you very much, Ms Rothman, for your presentation. Ms Lankin, you have a little more than a minute for your question.

Ms Lankin: Not a lot of time. Thank you very much for your presentation. I truly appreciate it. I think the issues are very linked, and I think we haven't had this focus brought before the committee, so it's important.

Southeast Grey, that part of the province, I visited there and there was a tremendous partnership between the local school board and the not-for-profit child care network that deals with child care, junior kindergarten, after-school programs, onsite rural servicing of farm families. Can you tell the committee just a bit about that, because that's the kind of partnership we're going to lose.

Ms Rothman: I think what you need to know is, in southeast Grey they have approximately 14 locations where they deliver early childhood. We have one location where the JK program is delivered in the child care centre because that's what makes sense when you live in Feversham, for example, which is 30 miles from Collingwood, that kind of thing.

Also, when the kids are in kindergarten for a two-hour program, it has a part-day program for whoever in that

neighbourhood wants to come in for two days a week, so it's a program that serves a wide range of needs of families. That's the kind of partnership that we'd lose. We have a similar kind of variety that happens in two extra rooms in public schools in southeast Grey and in urban areas. That's why I asked earlier whether people were aware of child care in schools and how they work.

Mr Smith: Thank you for your presentation. I certainly found it interesting and I acknowledge the challenges that you've raised in your presentation, particularly as it applies to the city of London.

With interest, yesterday in Sudbury we heard the story of the Sudbury board that was proceeding with discussions with its partners. Some might describe them as mavericks and others as leaders in terms of the positions they're taking with respect to school board amalgamation.

Given the top sentence on your last page, why do you come to the conclusion that those discussions that will take place between school boards will compromise what you have suggested will threaten or wipe out many of the gains? The Sudbury school board made it very clear that they're listening to the interests of their new partners and are going to position themselves to respond to those interests, so how are you coming to that conclusion at this point?

Ms Rothman: I think I have to be honest and say in watching many activities over the last year and a half, in this particular one we know how the partnerships work well but we also know the pressures. For partnerships to work well, there has to be some moving room. We have the Toronto board that's had child care in schools since the mid-1970s, long before there was any encouragement, but as their enrolment goes up and there's no space, they'll have no choice but to move out the child care centre.

There have been tremendous efforts on the part of the community, including, I might add, Minister Saunderson and the federal Liberal MP from one of the ridings, for the child cares in the old schools that are being rebuilt for which there's no child care, and there's been no resolution to this issue in nine months. I can't imagine that your government or any government wants to lose 50 or 70 child care spaces.

Ms Lankin: Two hundred in the four centres.

Ms Rothman: Two hundred in the four centres in Metro, and with all due respect, this will be happening in other places. Our concern is we have to date seen no goodwill, action or policy to convince us that anything will support those willing partners to respond to local needs. They won't have much financial ability, they'll have tighter strings on delivering programs, and I have no reason to be hopeful that even in the most willing boards they'll be able to hold on. If they have to charge seven to 10 bucks a square foot — I forgot to say that. If they have to go up to market rent or some kind of rent, child care programs can't afford it. They can't.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): Just one very brief comment and a question. The theme that I took from your presentation today is that 104 has a dramatic impact on every aspect of education, particularly early childhood education. I think you said this in your presentation, but just so we're clear, what impact, in your view,

will that have on Ontario's educational achievement or ability to achieve quality education down the road?

Ms Rothman: That's a good point. I don't claim to be an educational researcher but I'm a little bit familiar with the research in early childhood education and I think we all know that's where you have early identification of problems. That's also where you begin to come to some common foundation for children who've come from a diverse range of cultures, languages, backgrounds, economic situations. We also cement an important link between parents and communities at that early school level. I don't know if that sort of outlines it for you, but certainly early childhood education is the foundation. It's at the centre. We've had more research in the last five years and we'll continue to get more.

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Rothman, for your presentation. We sincerely appreciate your advice.

SIMCOE COUNTY ROMAN CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD

The Acting Chair: Our next group is the Simcoe County Roman Catholic Separate School Board. Welcome.

Mr Robert Gill: Thank you. My name is Robert Gill. I'm chair of the Simcoe County Roman Catholic Separate School Board. Delio D'Giovanni is a principal seconded to the board office, and Ernie Vaillancourt is a French-language trustee and vice-chair of the board.

The Simcoe County Roman Catholic Separate School Board is a separate school board serving approximately 19,000 Catholic students in a jurisdiction which stretches from the northern boundary of the GTA at Highway 9 to Bracebridge and encompasses a territory from Collingwood in the west to Brechin on the east side of Lake Simcoe. Simcoe separate is proud of its long heritage and involvement in Catholic education, commencing with the establishment of Fort Ste Marie Among the Hurons and the early Jesuits bringing Catholic education into this region of Canada.

We are among the fastest-growing regions in Ontario, and in fact the city of Barrie has recently been identified as the fastest-growing city in all of Canada. Projections would indicate this consistent growth will be sustained well into the 21st century. The Simcoe County Roman Catholic Separate School Board has had a long and proud tradition of serving the predominately French-language community clustered in the Midland-Penetang-Tiny township areas of the county. It is from this region that there has been strong representation and defence of the Francophone rights to French-language education.

It is certainly a pleasure and a privilege to address the committee on our home territory and we wish to express our appreciation for your efforts in travelling to Simcoe county as part of your hearings.

Initial reaction to Bill 104 is one of some pleasure in recognizing that the act has cooperated with the wishes of the local people in terms of the designation of the jurisdiction of this board. It was in 1994 that the Nipissing District Roman Catholic Separate School Board

and the Simcoe County Roman Catholic Separate School Board negotiated an agreement to transfer the northern two municipalities of Muskoka to the jurisdiction of the Simcoe County Roman Catholic Separate School Board. This agreement was reached on the basis of community discussion and a desire on the part of Huntsville and Lake of Bays to join with Simcoe separate as a recognition of the traffic, economic, social and media flows of people and information in this area.

1620

Subsequent to the agreement being reached between the two boards, the Minister of Education and Training was approached and requested that the Lieutenant General in Council take the necessary steps to enact appropriate regulations to bring this about. It appears that under Bill 104 this has been accomplished. Thus, specifically for Simcoe separate, the nature of the amalgamation and reorganization which will take place is one that has been contemplated by the boards involved and responds to local community desires.

The Simcoe County Roman Catholic Separate School Board is one of the lowest-spending school boards in the province. It has had a long history of frugality. There is, however, a fine line between being frugal and having insufficient funds to provide an adequate, comprehensive program for the students we serve. Over the years it has often been felt that we were walking very close to that line.

There has been a strong feeling in Simcoe county that there have been boards in the province that have had access to significantly more funds than those that were available to Simcoe county. They were, because of this, able to provide opportunities for some of their students which were not able to be provided within this jurisdiction.

We have, therefore, long maintained that education should be funded in a manner which is fair and equitable to all concerned. This will, we believe, necessitate the making of choices and determining courses of action which are of benefit to students within limited financial resources. It is our expectation that as part of the implementation of Bill 104 the government will be bringing forward a fair and equitable funding model for all students in the province.

Mr Ernie Vaillancourt: It is indeed encouraging to see implanted in the bill the recognition of the constitutional rights of separate school boards, French and English. With regard to school amalgamations in general, it is the opinion of the Simcoe County Roman Catholic Separate School Board that some amalgamations indeed will enhance the educational opportunities for children across the province.

We have concerns, however, that a number of the jurisdictions seem to be inordinately large. This mitigates against any type of legitimate representation and dialogue on the part of trustees, who are required to bring forward the views of their constituents for such large areas as we see being identified in northern Ontario. It will take a great deal of ingenuity on the part of the government to find methods to overcome the problems and concerns that are inherent in this type of representative model. Certainly even in the jurisdiction of Simcoe county, the possibil-

ity of having severely reduced numbers of trustees to represent a broad geographic area is difficult to imagine. We believe the government should consider seriously increasing the number of trustees from five, in order to provide for greater potential for representation.

It is also of concern to the trustees in this jurisdiction that the eligibility requirements have been significantly changed. It appears that this legislation focuses on a greater conflict for those who have spouses working in the system than those who have children working in the system. One would ask the question, why would one group of individuals with a conflict be singled out as ineligible and a second group be left with their conflict intact but still eligible to run for the office?

Mr Gill: At the heart of Catholic education is a highly competent Catholic teacher. It is for this reason that we petition the committee to recognize the continued need for Catholic teacher organizations which represent Catholic teachers. While we recognize that Bill 104 is silent on this particular issue, it is common knowledge that there will soon be a response to the Paoian report which must be integrated with the goals and objectives of Bill 104. For this reason, we would bring to your attention our great concern that Catholic teachers be represented by Catholic teacher organizations.

Bill 104 speaks to the creation of an Education Improvement Commission. This commission has not as yet been formed in all its fullness and will take at least some time to get organized and up and running. Subsequent to the passing of appropriate legislation, it is of concern to this board that many tasks are left to the commission in its unfettered authority which need to be done quickly and with some decisiveness, as well as with some understanding of the issues at hand. There is some concern that the commission, in responding to the multitude of issues, maintain a perspective of the Catholic school community and its constitutional rights as a basic principle of operation. It would be our contention that legislative direction to the commission should clearly stipulate that directions must be made with full respect to the constitutional rights of the separate school system and based on the principles inherent in that system.

We bring to your attention as well the concerns we have regarding the minister's announcements relative to the establishment and legislation of school community councils. It is clear to us as trustees that school community councils can provide a vibrancy and a connectivity to the local school community that is of tremendous value. This type of approach has been used in the special education areas for a number of years through the establishment of special education advisory committees. Those committees, when they are established, respect the rights of Catholic communities by requiring that members of the committees be supporters of the system to which they are providing advice. This we believe is a mandatory requirement for the establishment of school community councils if they are to respect the constitutional rights of the Catholic community.

Our final comments are on the need for stability and direction within the field of education. As the election time lines come nearer and information is not readily forthcoming, a great deal of unrest and concern develops

within the educational community. It would be our hope that the contents of Bill 104 would be proceeded with quickly and those additional steps which are necessary to the implementation process proceeded with in a prudent and speedy manner to stabilize the educational community in Ontario.

I take this opportunity to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. We will, of course, be available for any questions.

Mr Skarica: Dealing with the issue of trustees, I am looking at a report card prepared by the Coalition for Education Reform. They have an interesting cartoon on page 27 which shows information and trustees with a lock on it. I find it interesting; it was for the Metropolitan Separate School Board. Because the following year, as you know, there was a huge deficit in the Metro school board budget and the trustees indicated that they weren't aware of what was going on within the school system itself and the auditor who came in indicated the right hand didn't know what the left hand was doing. We heard from the Lakehead trustees that they felt that many times they were just a rubber stamp for the administrators. Currently now, do trustees have easy access to information? If they don't, how could that be alleviated?

Mr Gill: Of course, I can't speak for the other boards. I can speak for Simcoe separate. We have a good relationship with our senior advisory staff and we have input into the budget process. We are apprised of all budget restraints in spending and we can get that type of information from our director or the senior staff at any time we need it. We've not had a problem in that area and I feel that the trustees of Simcoe separate are kept very well aware of the situation.

Mrs McLeod: A quick question on the amalgamation and then I hope there will be time to ask a question about the trustees' role. The Muskoka portion of the area gets attached to you as a separate board and the public board gets attached to Victoria-Haliburton. Does that create any problems in terms of joint efforts, or is it not an issue for you?

Mr Gill: I believe there's only one school in the Muskoka area that we will be attaining and I don't think there'll be many joint ventures that we could do with the public board in that area if there were any more facilities there.

Mrs McLeod: You've touched on less access, whether it's in terms of numbers of trustees or, in some cases, geographical distance. I'm also concerned about less financial accountability as the government brings in the companion piece of taking over the 100% funding. I'd like you to comment on what you see the trustees' role being under that kind of scenario and whether you have any concerns about the continued existence of separate school boards as the governance body for Catholic ratepayers.

Mr Gill: We have grave concerns with the possible loss of the Catholic education system throughout Canada, not just Ontario, but our main concern is Simcoe county right now. We feel this is the first step in a process along the line to maybe take Catholic rights away from the Catholic ratepayers.

Mrs McLeod: Which would obviously be a concern.

Mr Wildman: The last comment really raises questions for me. Are you in support of the position that Patrick Daly and the association have taken, that the Catholic boards should hold in abeyance their right to tax pending the funding formula being published and seeing how it works for, say, five years? Or are you concerned that by doing that you may weaken your constitutional position?

Mr Gill: We are a bit concerned with the possibility of putting that off for five years, with the weakening of our possible chance of saying in the future that we would like to take that back. We feel that if we partway give it up now and put it in abeyance for now, somebody's going to say down the road: "You didn't care about it then, five years ago. It's out of the books now." We have concerns with that, yes.

Ms Lankin: Following up on Mr Skarica's question, I would point out while he said Lakehead trustees were just rubber stamps, that was one Lakehead trustee, not the majority board position that was put forward.

But again, you have a good relationship that you've indicated. Are you worried at all about the stripping of powers of trustees and of centralizing power in the bureaucracy and what that might mean for governance of Catholic schools?

Mr Gill: We believe there is in the footsteps right now a swing to that way, that the government is eventually going to take all the power away from the trustees and have the advisory councils there as a voice. We feel they're seeking control of the school boards personally and the trustees' role is being diminished to the point that they are going to be more or less bystanders. To put it in better terms, they're wanting to make us rubber-stamp people instead of the people who get involved in decision-making.

The Acting Chair: Thank you once again, gentlemen, for your presentation. The committee appreciates your advice.

1630

ONTARIO ENGLISH CATHOLIC
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION
DUFFERIN-PEEL ELEMENTARY UNIT

The Acting Chair: I would ask Krystyna Peever, the president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, to now come forward. Welcome to the standing committee on social development.

Mrs Krystyna Peever: I'm Krystyna Peever, Dufferin-Peel elementary unit president of OECTA. With me is Cathy Astolfo, a past president of the unit and currently vice-principal of one of our elementary schools.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you. We are going to, in a brief discussion, cover what we feel are five important issues that need to be addressed when looking at Bill 104. I expect that you have heard some of these, but I am going to reiterate them nevertheless: Denominational rights, the Catholicity issue is one; democratic issues in terms of constitutional rights of all taxpayers; the finance questions that have arisen out of the lack of information in Bill 104; also staffing; and finally, meeting students' needs. These we feel are issues

that have not been dealt with in detail and raise some concerns. I am going to ask Cathy to deal with the first two.

Mrs Cathy Astolfo: I will just highlight some of the concerns we have with regard to denominational rights. The first concern that we would like to bring to your attention is a very specific concern to Dufferin-Peel, and that is that in our area we will be, under Bill 104, suffering a dissection rather than an amalgamation. Dufferin will be removed from Dufferin-Peel and will go with Wellington.

The reason we are concerned about this is because central to our Catholic education is the partnership with the church. Specifically in Orangeville schools, the relationship with the church has over many years been a very close one and it is, as I said, central to our Catholicism and to our catechism that that relationship continue. The schools in Orangeville: It highlights very much that if we remove that relationship, what will happen is we will actually be removed from the archdiocese with regard to school; for example, our sacraments. We have a very close relationship with the schools. The bishop, for instance, is involved in the sacrament of confirmation and we rely on the archdiocese to provide that service for us. In removing Orangeville from the Dufferin-Peel segment, you're actually moving those schools into another archdiocese and we believe this will infringe upon the denominational rights and our right to provide that excellent Catholic education and that faith which is central to it.

As well, again specific to Dufferin being removed from Dufferin-Peel, the only Catholic secondary school that would be available in the new, amalgamated Wellington-Dufferin board would be one that is currently in Guelph. That is approximately an hour's drive away from Orangeville. The students would then perhaps be allowed to attend, as they currently do attend, Robert F. Hall Secondary School in Caledon.

However, we don't see the sense of removing Dufferin if we are simply going to have our students having to try to have a relationship with a church that's outside their archdiocese, in addition to which they're going to also have to have a relationship with a secondary school that is outside their board. So we really, strongly would like to see that part of Bill 104 changed. We would like to see Dufferin-Peel remain as it is.

We would like to also add to that, to quote Minister Snobelen's memo regarding meeting student needs, where he says, "The model must recognize the significant differences among communities, schools and students, and address these differences to ensure that excellence in education programming can be consistently attained." We would submit that if Dufferin is removed from Dufferin-Peel, the schools in Orangeville would be left in a situation that could not ensure that their excellence in Catholic education can be attained.

We would also like to mention, and again, this is a less specific concern, but still it is one that Dufferin-Peel shares, that Bill 104 is silent on the issue of Catholic representation. We currently have the right to elect Catholic trustees and we are concerned that there is not a specific mention of the fact that we should retain that

right. We would be very nervous about the fact that this is not being addressed.

We also believe Bill 104 jeopardizes the long-held democratic rights of the Roman Catholic education system as it currently exists in Ontario, particularly since the commission has not been established and yet some of the powers of that commission will be retroactive. In the meantime, we are not being given direction about issues that are of vital concern to the Catholic system and to the continuing existence of the Catholic system.

We believe any initiatives or decisions that are made by the commission should not be in some way retroactive. We also have some concerns about the powers that have been given to the commission, especially with regard to Catholic education. We have some concerns and questions about the purpose, for instance, of recommendations on outsourcing of non-instructional services. That affects our Catholic education specifically, and in general we believe it will affect the excellence of education, period. We would like to mention such things as custodians and secretaries, teacher-librarians and kindergarten teachers. We have grave concerns about the mention of outsourcing and that they are outside the education system. We don't believe they are.

We also have some concerns about the involvement of parents in school councils. It is silent on the issue of Catholicism being represented. We also have concerns that some of the load of the education system is being put on to parents when they don't really want it.

We also have concerns about the mention of charter schools. We are concerned that this could set up a two-tiered system, one for the rich and one for the not-so-rich.

We also have grave concerns about the removal of local jurisdiction rights, particularly with the Catholic school community. Catholic trustees were able to respond to and reflect the needs of their local communities, and Bill 104 usurps that right and undermines the ability of Catholic trustees to assist with our particular identity and particular needs.

1640

Mrs Peever: I'll continue with the discussion of financial implications. We're quite disturbed by the inflexibility that seems to be created by Bill 104. We work in a school board that is really very much dependent on the economy around Toronto, as well as the immigrant patterns, which constantly change. We find that the suggestion that a budget will be set and then will need to be approved, should there be any changes to that budget, puts Dufferin-Peel in a really horrendous situation.

Certainly we have found that whatever plans are made in the school board in May have to be changed drastically in September and October. If hiring and if putting up new schools or portables — because essentially 40% of the students in our particular board live in portables — cannot be done without waiting another month, I can tell you that the quality of education for the students of my area is certainly compromised there, because first of all, you get the extra influx of children, then you have to apply to the commission for permission to purchase new facilities and then you have to get them. We are now talking three to four months of children being unable to

learn in the best kind of accommodations they should be able to. That's a very definite concern. You will note in our brief that our population projections continue to indicate growth, so we're very concerned with being restricted the way the bill appears to.

Next, there's a definite problem with transfer funds being frozen. We have to question the intent behind that. We are a school board which has gotten out of debt through sacrifices by the employee groups and we have worked very hard, not only to get our board out of debt, but also to make sure the board has a fairly enviable surplus situation. Where will this money go? Will it suddenly disappear? We cannot help but be suspicious that the money that has been raised from our ratepayers will not be available for the children of those same ratepayers.

Another very serious concern is the question of the transfer of staff, as it's going to be controlled by the Education Improvement Commission. It was already alluded to. Our schools in Orangeville have some real problems, not only with the geographic distance to the board that they're supposed to be joining, but also as to the staffing needs of the two elementary schools that do exist.

In particular, I'm speaking about 62 teaching members, and there are other support staff, who are essentially in a position of waiting to know what will happen in their lives. At this moment, because the commission is really not active, or shouldn't be, according to the law, our teachers do not know what to do. They have not been allowed to access the transfer processes that are available to all of our members because the board is waiting to find out what is permissible in this situation, so we have people whose personal lives are hanging in the air. They are reluctant to leave the area they've chosen to live and work in; on the other hand, they are also very aware of the fact that they will not have the same rights and the

same benefits and wages if they are forced to join Wellington.

We're in a situation where we're saying there has to be a consideration of red-circling these members' wages and benefits and retirement gratuity, or at least providing them with an open window to return to the Peel separate area, if that's what we become, just as was done for Bill 30. We refer to the process in our brief. Also, to go back to the idea of red-circling, I know that Timiskaming and Cochrane were forced to amalgamate. I also know that they are still working under separate agreements, and it's 1997.

I would hope that if the decision is made that indeed Orangeville must join Wellington and the children there will have to share whatever resources they were able to get under a suburban board with the rural board they're being forced to join, at least the rights of the workers in Orangeville schools be considered by looking at some of the prior precedents that have been set.

The Vice-Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Mrs Peever: Oh heavens. A very important thing for me to cover is outsourcing. Our children need consistency. They need to work in an environment of trust and acceptance. Outsourcing makes that hard to achieve.

Is that it? I understand. I'm assured all of you can read, so some of the points I wasn't able to cover by speaking, I'm sure you'll be able to read. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is scheduled for 5 o'clock. That makes our break 10 minutes. Would the members of the committee like additional time, bearing in mind that we have no cancellations for tonight and that will push us back?

Interjections: Just keep going.

The Vice-Chair: Okay, we'll resume in 10 minutes.

The committee recessed from 1649 to 1701.

Report continues in volume B.

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Standing committee on social development

Fewer School
Boards Act, 1997

Comité permanent des affaires sociales

Loi de 1997 réduisant
le nombre de conseils scolaires



Chair: Annamarie Castrilli
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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Thursday 20 March 1997

Jeudi 20 mars 1997

Report continues from volume A.

1701

FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 RÉDUISANT
LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Continuing consideration of Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / *Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système, en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.*

AURORA HIGH SCHOOL
ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Vice-Chair: Welcome back after that long break, refreshed, rested, ready to go. The next delegation is Aurora High School Advisory Council, Nancy McKeraghan.

Mrs Nancy McKeraghan: I'd like to introduce John Ryan, who is also a member of our council.

We are here to represent a group of 21 individuals. We are community members, administration, teaching and support staff, parents and students who have formed together in a positive supportive role at our school. We have been working for the past two years. Even though we weren't really legislated, we have been working together and as such our group has changed slightly from one year to the next. We are very concerned with Bill 104 and the implications it's going to have on Aurora High School in particular, on our board in general and on advisory councils.

Mr John Ryan: Just before we get into that, we want to look at where we are presently with our board. We have been involved with our board for many years, several of us on the committee. We've been involved in all kinds of processes. We've shared ideas and concerns, we've had exchanges with the board, they've made information available to us, and we think they've worked diligently to assist and deal with groups such as our own.

Meetings are open, minutes are available, several of us have participated in board committees such as school user groups, transportation committees. We are happy with the situation we have with our existing board.

We elect our local trustees democratically, and we emphasize "local." We think they have been operating in a fiscally responsible manner, balancing the budget. Even though they receive a much reduced amount in grants — I think they were reduced by something like \$20 million last year — our enrolments are still going up by approximately 2,500 per year. So we're already doing quite a bit more with less.

The communities in our region are very diverse, ranging from the really intense urban communities in the south boundary along Metro to small towns and medium-sized towns, to very large rural districts in the north. We think our trustees have a good feel for these communities. They know what is required in these communities. They work together with their professional staff. At each election a number of the incumbents are returned. With their professional staff, there is some continuity to the system as it now exists, and we think that level of continuity and stability is very important.

Now Nancy will look at the impact we think it will have on our board.

Mrs McKeraghan: Under Bill 104 the board will have greatly reduced powers, and that includes some things we feel they handle very well, such as staff hirings, promotions and so forth. They're going to have limited powers from the standpoint that they are not going to make long-term decisions or any decisions involving expenditures over \$50,000. As an example of that, one of the things councils are very concerned about is some budgetary dollars to allow us to operate. It's impossible for our board to budget \$250 per school right now because that exceeds the \$50,000 limit. That lets you know what kind of minimal opportunities they are going to have to really be effective.

The Education Improvement Commission is government-appointed, and we have concerns about that.

The minister declared that he will "restore trustees to their traditional and effective role as guardians of local education." We'd like to know what that means. It's a very vague concept. We feel the bill should certainly state some very clearly defined rules as to what the new partnerships are going to be.

We want to know who will be responsible to ensure that there will be uniformity for students across the region and the province, who will ensure that curriculum standards are adhered to, who will ensure that the legislated programs for students with special needs are going to be preserved. Where does Bill 104 show that any

proposed savings will go back into Ontario's classrooms? How is it possible to focus on student learning and public accountability when the new district boards won't be making any of those important decisions?

The feasibility of such a commission having the knowledge, understanding and commitment to act on our behalf, as our present board does, leaves us with questions. As a politically appointed group, it has no accountability and it has no liability. It's going to be allowed to make and/or interfere with decisions that our duly elected board members might be able to make on our behalf. We have concerns about the feasibility of communicating with an external group that's going to be operating at arm's length.

The Education Improvement Commission and the various committees which will act on its behalf — again, they are not accountable and they have no liability in regard to their decisions — we feel are not going to be as cost-effective as the current board structure is. We fail to see where any potential savings might occur with the proposed structure of appointed committees, and we ask where and how are the budgets for the commission and its committees being formulated and approved. Nor can we say that the proposed structures are going to improve the quality of education that our students at Aurora High School presently enjoy.

The commission, it indicates in the bill, may make decisions based on its "opinion." We would hope strongly that any changes to the educational excellence of our system would be based on more practical evidence than opinion, particularly non-elected and non-accountable opinion. How will appointments to the Education Improvement Commission and its committees be made and what criteria will be used?

Although it indicates that the commission is going to be there to handle the transition process, we see no evidence in the bill that the commission's authority will cease after that time.

Mr Ryan: As we look at the bill, particularly section 335, which speaks to the strengthening of the role of school councils, we certainly have some concerns as to what that might mean and what the impact would be. Before we look at that, let us look at what the existing situation is with school councils.

We have been quite fortunate in getting a good, positive group that have been able to work together, and I think we are able to do things which are positive and helpful to the school. But in our speaking with many of the other school councils in our area and elsewhere, it appears that they have quite a bit of difficulty actually getting school councils together.

Parents are concerned about the amount of time it takes; about making decisions when they aren't really elected, they just are in there by acclamation; the problem of getting adequate information to these councils, especially without budgets; getting appropriate information from community sources or from the ministry; the minimal number of people that come forward to participate; the lack of ways and means of communicating with people in the community. A simple mailing from our high school costs in excess of \$600 just to mail something to every student in the school, to every family.

The material comes from a variety of sources. There's just a deluge of material coming from all kinds of sources. How do parent volunteers deal with that without professional help or professional support?

The number of meetings and expectations: Over the last two months we have had in excess of 25 meetings that we have been invited to attend or could attend. That's a lot of meetings in two and a half months.

Budgetary matters: How do we deal with them? What are the possible consequences for schools that cannot form councils, that don't get enough volunteers? The bill seems to indicate that you want to put this into law. How is it possible to mandate volunteers? We are volunteers; we're not elected people.

At Aurora High School we think we have a good, cohesive group. We're comfortable with our advisory role and our supportive role, but we are not administrators and we don't want to be administrators. We want to deal with individuals with backgrounds in education, such as principals, vice-principals, and not business managers. We want to consult with individuals who understand policy, curriculum and, most of all, children and students. We don't want to be dealing with somebody who solely understands finances.

We are not educators. We don't want to be. We're parents. We are content with using our skills and resources in our community to try to help our school. Even with the problems we have, we have covered a number of things, and we have listed something like 14 different items that we have been involved in already this year.

Our council is committed and united. We have to spend a lot of time ensuring that new members are brought up to date, but continuity is a real concern because parents, volunteers, may not be there for several years; they may only be there for a short period of time. There will be an impact on these councils from Bill 104.

Mrs McKeraghan: We're going to skip through the rest of the part very quickly. We'd ask you to just follow along with us, if you would, because we would like to have some opportunity to answer some questions.

We're responsible to a community that did not come out in droves to elect us and we're concerned with the fact that we may be in a position of power. Part of that brings liability with it and I'm sure that we're going to shy away from making any kind of decisions that deal with employment standards and labour relations, health and safety, building, bylaw standards. We're just not equipped to do that.

We feel that the present school advisory council is a good one but it's going to require at least a minimum of five years to work out any bugs as it presently exists. When you download additional responsibilities, you're downloading liability and we have great concerns about the liability issue. We're going to be vulnerable to a wage range of aspects there and we're asking if true volunteers are going to be able to afford the risks.

Who is going to pick up the cost of any liability insurance? Are volunteers going to be able to make the insurance requirements? If paid members of the Education Improvement Commission and its agents are not

subject to accountability and liability, should volunteer members of school councils expect to be considered otherwise?

There is potential abuse of power. When you have minimal people participating, you can certainly have a select group with a particular bias who might become involved. We want to know what are the ramifications for schools unable to form a council. It is difficult for some to form a group now when it's only advisory. What's going to happen when it becomes more powerful?

Mr Ryan: Just to close off, our last section we've titled Bill 104, An Incomplete Document. We think there are an awful lot of things that have not been dealt with that are very fuzzy in the bill that we just don't understand. We've read the bill. As stated, the purpose of this act is "to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system." How is it going to do that? Where in the bill is the evidence that the bill will do what it is proclaimed to do? We don't see at this point that there will be any obvious improvement to Ontario's educational system. We see the opportunity for further duplication of services with the Education Improvement Commission and the bureaucracy that's going to go with it. Five to seven people are not going to handle 66 school boards and the multitude of work, especially when it goes right down to hiring and firing.

We see additional costs. The power of local decisions is taken away. Our locally elected officials are placed in the hands of appointed commissions. We see reduced accountability; increased opportunity for non-professionals to be making important decisions in the educational field; things that are going to affect our kids for years.

We don't see any evidence that the bill will have a positive outcome on our educational system. There's no hard evidence that the cost savings are anything more than assumed. They assume savings, but are there really savings? We feel that the costs will simply be transferred from our boards to the Education Improvement Commission because they're going to have to have the professionals to look at things. This commission is not obligated to provide the public with any information, financial or otherwise; the commission must report solely to the minister of the day, whoever that minister may be.

We are concerned with the impact of the bill on our classrooms. Despite the government's promises that nothing will be taken out of the classrooms, we already see the impact in our classrooms.

You're asking us to make public decisions without sufficient time to gather appropriate data, to assess the data, to formulate responses. If Bill 104 is truly for the benefit of Ontario's students, a little more time to study it and all its implications is not too much to ask. If the minister has recognized the importance of allowing the Education Improvement Commission to "conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations," as stated in section 335, with regard to the future of school advisory councils, then surely the minister can do no less than allow the province's general public to do the same thing with regard to this bill.

We already see excellence in our school, and I think in a lot of other schools. The proof is the students who come out of our school. We want you to show us how

the system proposed under the bill guarantees that the excellence we already have will not be destroyed. It's the old idea, as my grandmother used to say, "Don't throw out the baby with the bathwater." We have a lot of good things now. Don't destroy them. Show us how governance of education in the province of Ontario under Bill 104 will be "simpler, smaller, less costly, more accountable, and lead to better service." We're just not sure how that's going to happen.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much. I'm afraid your time is up. We appreciate your taking time out. The students at Aurora High School and your board of education are very fortunate to have parents such as yourselves.

Ms Lankin, question to the parliamentary assistant.

Ms Lankin: There are a number of questions that have been raised by this presentation that I would like to put on the record and ask the ministry to respond to.

First of all, after Bill 104, who will be responsible to ensure that there will be uniformity for students across the region and province, who will ensure that curriculum standards are adhered to, who will ensure that the legislated programs for students with special needs are preserved?

Second, where does Bill 104 show that any of the proposed savings will go back into Ontario classrooms? I suspect the answer is that Bill 104 doesn't. Can the ministry provide us a guarantee that any savings as a result of Bill 104, if there are any, will be reinvested in the classroom and that there will not be reductions to the education budget?

Third, with respect to liability of volunteers on parent councils, what would be the liability in relation to decisions made in good faith by members of parent councils? Who would pick up the costs of any liability insurance?

Last, what are the ramifications for a school unable to form a parent council and where would the decisions normally made by that parent council revert to? To the level of the school board or to the ministry?

The Vice-Chair: Thank you, Ms Lankin. Those questions will be noted and responded to by the ministry.

Mrs McLeod: I have a question about the questions, because some of the questions are new in terms of being placed on the record, some reiterate questions that already stand on the record. We're now into the eighth day of hearings. We have only two days left, and unless my probably futile motion has some future, we're going to be going into clause-by-clause amendments the day after we get back. I'm wondering when our questions are going to receive answers and whether the information will come before we have to deal with the bill.

The Vice-Chair: That's a very good question. Mr Skarica, would you like to respond to that?

Mr Skarica: Yes. We've been on the road, as you know, all week and we're going back to Toronto tomorrow. I would think no later than Monday.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Skarica, the questions that I provided in written form were outstanding questions that existed from the time of the Toronto hearings, which were prior to the March break.

The Vice-Chair: We have all this assistance here with cell phones and computer linkages to Toronto. I would

expect a faster turnaround on those questions and I would think it would be in the interests of the entire committee and of public debate to have those responses in a quicker fashion.

1720

PETERBOROUGH COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the Peterborough County Board of Education, Nancy Martin, past chair.

Mr McLean: While they're coming, Mr Chairman, I just might say that nothing has changed in 15 years. We still request and never get.

The Vice-Chair: Welcome, Ms Martin. You have 15 minutes. Please begin.

Ms Nancy Martin: Thank you. My name is Nancy Martin. I am chair of the education reform work group for the Peterborough County Board of Education, a group that has been put in place to monitor education reform proposals. We have distributed a brief to you which I will not be reading. I will be highlighting some of the points out of that. On the very last page of the brief is a fact sheet which has been distributed to our students, parents and ratepayers about the proposals that have come forward — the highlights of Bill 104.

On behalf of the Peterborough county board, I'd like to thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to come and speak to you this afternoon. At the expense of making us sound very ordinary, we believe that we represent a very nice mix of the population of the province of Ontario. We're a mid-sized city, mixed with a rural, farming and cottage population. We're also a mid-sized board, about 17,000 students and about 1,600 employees. We have an equal number of trustees from the urban and the rural/cottage areas and a trustee who represents the first nations in our jurisdiction.

There are three areas of concern which the board draws to your attention. The first is the reduction in local representation on boards of education, the second is the transition time between the dissolution of the present boards and the formation of our new district school board 14, and the third is the power of the Education Improvement Commission.

The Fewer School Boards Act is designed to improve accountability, effectiveness and quality in our school system. We believe that an act that reduces public participation and truncates democratic representation will not improve accountability. School board trustees such as ours live and work in the communities they serve and have a very clear idea how to balance the community's needs and the community's resources.

We have reduced our budget over the past five years from \$113 million to a projected budget of \$105 million in 1997, while maintaining and even enhancing program. Our community chose, for example, to continue its junior kindergarten program, in spite of provincial disincentives, because that program was important to the citizens of Peterborough county. We believed that the education of young children was a wise social and economic investment in our community. We have an open budget process

with extensive public consultation, and because of this we are able to discern the balance of needs and resources.

School board trustees in the Peterborough County Board of Education are very accountable to our constituents. Provincial control over education and the formation of boards with reduced representation will in fact make the public education system less accountable to our citizens.

Accountability is also measured in other ways. Our students and staff contribute in our community in a myriad of ways. We also have safe, clean schools, an efficient and safe transportation system for our children and a very high level of classroom volunteer participation, coupled with a strong school council organization. All of these are indications of the Peterborough County Board of Education's effectiveness and accountability for the investment our ratepayers have made in their schools and in their school systems.

A larger governance structure with fewer representatives will create a sense of alienation or, worse yet, splintering of the school communities. Peterborough County Board of Education is an ideal size to operate efficiently and with accountability. We reduced the number of trustees and have streamlined our decision-making process while continuing to cultivate community support.

Our first nations representation has enriched the students of Peterborough county schools, bringing with it an appreciation of and a respect for the culture, language, ceremony and arts of the native communities. This contribution is very much part of the character of the education we offer in our city and county schools.

Losing significant trustee representation from our community not only offends democratic principles but will have a significant effect, we believe, on student programs deemed important by the Peterborough community.

If Bill 104 proceeds, trustees have serious concerns regarding the transition time. There's no articulation of the transfer of responsibilities from one board to the next. We're apprehensive that this has not been clearly thought out. Newly elected trustees will lack information, background and the historical context to make decisions which are in the best interests of our students. Students must not be shortchanged in their education while there is confusion and disorganization at the governance and quite possibly at the financial level.

The short time frame for these massive changes is unrealistic to execute a smooth and well-considered transition. I also remind the committee that school boards in Ontario have been amalgamated before. We are concerned that as school boards bulk up yet again, staff and administrators will be expected to address the merger and not the students.

We are worried about education dollars being siphoned off to accomplish a political agenda at the expense of students. The lack of any smooth organizational transformation will create less, not more, accountability for the expenditure of educational dollars. A second amalgamation in less than 30 years is costly and there's little evidence to show that bigger is better. Some of our communities still resent the first amalgamation.

Our third area of concern is with the appointment and powers of the Education Improvement Commission. Our concerns are articulated in the brief before you and generally reflect, I am sure, many of those who have spoken to you. I do not wish to dwell on this since the Ontario Public School Boards' Association and other individuals and groups have noted with alarm the undemocratic appointment process coupled with unquestioned powers of decision-making.

If Bill 104 is designed to improve accountability for public education in Peterborough county, it will not accomplish this goal with the reduction in the representation of community members. If it's also designed to reduce costs, we do not believe this will be accomplished, as we are a board which is low-spending and cost-effective. We believe we offer a quality education to our students, and through system-wide testing, participation in provincial reviews and provincial testing, we constantly work to improve the quality of program for our students.

If governance must be changed, we see value in one publicly funded school system which respects constitutional and linguistic rights. We see this system accompanied by a realistic formula of provincial financial support augmented by the local ratepayer.

I'd be prepared to entertain some questions if there's time.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much for your presentation. We appreciate you coming.

Your concern over accountability with regard to the Education Improvement Commission and its role and so on has been shared by many who have come before this committee. What I want to ask you is, who do you think will be interested in running to be a trustee after Bill 104 is passed, if it passes? Since the decision-making with regard to funding and expenditures and curriculum is going to be concentrated in the bureaucracy at Queen's Park, won't trustees just simply become sort of a complaint bureau?

Ms Martin: That's exactly the question that I as a trustee am asking myself. When trustees do not really have any say over what happens within the school system, I would agree with you that we will become a complaint bureau. This is a personal opinion, not a board opinion: I think it's just a way of sort of having us fade away into the night. I see that demise. I don't know who would run as a school board trustee under these kinds of circumstances. There will be people, but it would be a job that would be pretty futile.

Mr Grimmett: You mention in your brief that you and some of your constituents are concerned going back to the last amalgamation in the late 1960s. I wonder if it's possible that this concern is partly to do with a perceived lack of involvement by the community with an individual school and whether that might be addressed by the development of school councils, which is suggested in Bill 104.

Ms Martin: The Peterborough County Board of Education has had a very long, strong history of school councils. The current trend of having school councils is not new to our board at all. We didn't call them school councils; we called them community school associations.

We've had a very long history of that not only with financial support, but all kinds of office support and communications support. That school council now exists, so that's not a difference.

One of the things we've been very careful of is that when election time comes around we always make sure there are equal numbers of trustees, that there's some way it's balanced out, how many representatives are from the county area and how many from the city in terms of population. The city frequently ends up with a trustee count higher than the rural count, but we always make sure that we change the count so there's a balance of eight trustees — in this case now it's six — from the rural area, six from the city, and our first nations representative as well.

There is still a sense in some of our communities that the big city of Peterborough — it's perfectly understandable — has a tendency to impose upon rural communities.

Mrs McLeod: I want to pick up on your response to Mr Wildman because, like you, I'm concerned that the combination of this legislation, which makes boards less effective because they're less accessible, and the taking away of any taxing rights of school boards and therefore any direct financial accountability, is going to render boards so almost irrelevant that they are going to fade away into the night as you've suggested. So I want to ask you the consequences of that.

If we should both be right in our fears, it leaves the local governance of education to school councils which to this point have universally said that's not something they want. If we combine that with what I believe will be underfunding, we have a situation where we have potentially, by default, 5,000 charter schools by any other name with serious funding problems. You've expressed a concern. I wonder if you'd like to —

Ms Martin: I think I mentioned in my brief the splintering, and that's what I was getting at. With the county system or a trustee or a board system, there's someone watching over the good of the whole rather than tiny little dribs and drabs of small school communities. It's more cohesive in the community, and we'll lose that.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much. I wish we had more time. We appreciate your coming down. Your comments are very well taken.

1730

MARY LOUISE WESSENGER

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is Mary Louise Wessinger. Welcome.

Mrs Mary Louise Wessinger: My name is Mary Louise Wessinger. For the past 30 years I have been a secondary school teacher. I am a parent of three children. One of them has graduated from university and is now an elementary school teacher. I have two other students still in university. So I am extremely interested in the education system of Ontario.

I wanted to mention some of my concerns with this bill, which are as follows:

If Bill 104 passes, the provincial government will have complete control over the establishment of wards within

a district school board. There is no requirement for representation by population. Thus we have an electoral process used which could be and probably would be unfair.

In addition, by reducing the number of boards so drastically, the resulting boards may cover an unreasonably large area, which will make communication with a trustee very limited. Fortunately, Simcoe county is not going to be greatly affected by the distribution, but I know of two proposed northern district boards which have an area equal to that of France. If a parent did manage to contact a trustee in such an area, the latter would probably no longer have power to help the parent. Almost every local issue would need to be referred to a larger bureaucracy.

I am concerned at the proposed salary cap of \$5,000 for trustees. Such a token salary would only attract an individual who had a special axe to grind in the educational system or a person who was willing to spend only a minimum amount of time and effort because he or she already had a full-time job. There is also a possibility that corporations that wish to have an influence on education would be only too willing to float trustee candidates.

Of greatest concern is the complete takeover by the province of educational spending and taxation. This means that local district boards have only token power and will be unresponsive to local needs. A better solution, I believe, would be to maintain some local responsibility for education taxation, perhaps in the 10% to 20% range of total costs.

We live in a time of alienation of the public by the political process. The public does not believe that Big Brother is better than locally elected representatives. Big Brother is less accountable than local officials. Big Brother is less sensitive to local needs and does not really improve quality but seeks the lowest standard approach for all.

In an effort to cut educational costs I am concerned that the legislation will force school boards to contract out non-instructional services such as librarians, psychologists, guidance counsellors, secretarial staff, custodial and maintenance personnel. During my 30 years of teaching, I have become very aware of the extreme importance of the teamwork within our schools. Today's youth struggle with a myriad of personal problems and need the stability of a team of caring, familiar adults in various roles in our schools. Can you imagine how well your constituency office would operate using contracted-out services?

The emphasis by the Education Improvement Commission on the strengthening role of school councils and increased parental involvement in education governance hints at the government's hidden agenda: the establishment of charter schools. This would result in the death of any effective public education system.

Finally, I wonder what is happening to the democratic process in Ontario when a provincially appointed bureaucratic system beyond challenge in our courts will govern our children's education.

Mr Skarica: On pages 1 and 2 you make an interesting comment we haven't heard before and maybe we could explore it further. You say, "There is also a

possibility that corporations that wish to have an influence in education would float trustee candidates." Perhaps you could give us some vision as to how that would occur, because I'm having difficulty envisioning why a corporation would want to do that and what they would seek to obtain by doing that.

Mrs Wessenger: I think they would have a hidden agenda. I'm wondering about what person would be willing to spend many, many hours as a trustee unless it was financially at least going to put them on an equilibrium, if they have to travel all over the country. I suppose I am concerned that maybe companies that want to further their own agenda — maybe they have an interest in promoting cigarettes, in promoting their particular type of soft drink — would be willing to say: "We feel we would be willing to sponsor you. Perhaps you could put a word in for us to make sure our product is sold at your track and field events. Perhaps you can make sure that the pop machines in the school carry only our product," and so forth. I think there would tend to be some political influence there.

Mrs McLeod: I was afraid, as you began to introduce yourself as both a teacher and a concerned parent, that you might have far too much background and concern for education to be considered a credible witness today, because we've been told that parents who have expressed concern about this are somehow the captives of teachers' unions and therefore are less than representative. I appreciate your being here and I appreciate the perspective you bring both as a teacher and as a parent.

I want to ask you about the hidden agenda aspect, because I think one of the main agendas is actually to make major cuts to education. If charter schools end up being the consequence, that for many people might be seen as a not unhappy resolution. But it's all based on being able to sell the system as broken, that the system needs sweeping change because it's broken. I ask you as a teacher and a parent, do you think the system's broken?

Mrs Wessenger: I think it is on the verge of being broken. We have seen a tremendous increase in class size. There is a tremendous increase in the number of problems students have. They need more assistance, as do the teachers, to help cope with all the psychological problems of the children. I have many students in my class who are under custodial care. To put them in a crowded group where the class size is increasing, to hint that there will be any career guidance, not done by people who are trained in dealing with teenagers, to indicate that possibly we don't need the extra assistance, don't need the psychologist working and hired by the board I think puts these students in jeopardy. There are many very disturbed kids who are not in jail but in our schools, and we need extra help. The school no longer is just the place for learning; it is also a home.

Ms Lankin: Thank you for your presentation. I wanted to ask you a question about your observation that taking away some of the responsibility of taxation from local school boards will mean that they have only token power and will be unresponsive to local needs. I have to admit to you that I have always myself favoured seeing education being funded off the provincial income tax base as opposed to the property tax base. My concern about the

loss of powers of boards is that the legislation itself takes away authority in certain aspects of decision-making. If the bill didn't do that, is there a way in which you could have strong local boards making decisions with the money being funded from the provincial government, or do you see it as necessary that they have an independent ability to tax and set rates and spend discretionary budgets out of that?

Mrs Wessenger: I'm afraid that the money available from the province allocated to different areas may not suffice the needs in special areas, where you need more buses, where you need more psychological services for students and where perhaps you have more ethnic groups with a higher diversity of language problems. I think you should allow areas the ability to raise a little bit of extra money because of their own local problems, which no one else may know or care about, but they do. I'm sure parents would be willing to have a slight financial contribution from their taxes because of their own problems in that area.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much. I apologize that we have no more time.

1740

DURHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is from the Durham Board of Education, Ruth Ann Schedlich, chairperson, Grant Yeo, director, and Bobbie Drew, vice-chair. Welcome. You have 15 minutes.

Mrs Ruth Ann Schedlich: We'd like to thank you for the time that was allocated to us. We're hoping that our director will be arriving presently. He's downtown at the ministry at a meeting today.

The Durham Board of Education came into existence in 1969 during the consolidation of school boards. From that time, student enrolment has increased from 45,468 to 60,842 students in 1997. The current growth rate is approximately 2% per year. The Durham board has provided quality programming for its students while being fiscally responsible. During this time period it has shown enormous change. The board continues to support changes that benefit students, community and ratepayers. Recently the Durham Board of Education received the 1996 Carl Bertelsmann Prize, awarded for exemplary approaches. The congratulatory letter from Dr Marga Prohl, head of division state and administration, Germany, indicated, "Your board is top of the list in an international comparison of school systems."

The Fewer School Boards Act is described as An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system.

Reinhard Mohn, chairman of the board of the Bertelsmann Foundation, stated that the Durham board "represents an ideal model for reforms which the German school system could institute."

"Your board has shown that a school board can function more effectively when it sees itself not as an authority issuing orders, but rather, when it works in close cooperation with individual schools, concentrating on decentralization and qualification. Your work in the field of professionalizing school management and peda-

gogical work through ongoing further education programs for principals and teachers — taking place on weekends or during vacation time, in the development of curricula appropriate to the demands of the regional economy, in the encouragement of cooperation between parents and teachers, has thoroughly impressed not only the Bertelsmann Foundation but also the German Minister of Education, local administrators, principals and teachers."

The minister in his letter to the educational community dated January 24, 1997, which served as a prologue to statements on Bill 104, indicated that enrolment had increased by 16% between 1985-95, school board spending increased by 82%, property taxes shot up by 120%.

In Durham the enrolment increased by 22.17% in this period, while provincial operating grants to the Durham school board decreased by 20.7%. As well, property taxes increased in Durham by 85%, well below the provincial average over that same period. The Durham Board has consistently spent below the provincial average per student, and a recent study of school boards has shown Durham to be the largest school board spending the least over provincial ceilings. This spending level has occurred even with mandated programs by the various ministries that began with funds which later disappeared.

In respect to the cost of education, the Durham board's per pupil expenditure levels are the lowest of any large board in the province. To address the tremendous growth throughout the system, the board has in effect paid for the cost of one new school every year for the past several years from its operating grants. Provincial capital grants have not kept pace with this growth. Despite the board's efforts in this regard, 29% of its students are in portables. The 450 portables used daily would be the equivalent of 30 elementary schools. In addition, there is an aging infrastructure that is expensive to maintain; 60% of the schools in Durham are over 30 years of age.

The ability to access the local property tax base has allowed the public school system to be funded with respect to local circumstances and needs through the decisions of locally elected public school trustees. Bill 104 addresses "accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system." To address growth and accommodation, either the right of the public system to access the base should be retained or the new funding mechanism should provide provincial grants to recognize the challenges of accommodating growth while maintaining an aging infrastructure.

The province introduced the education Development Charges Act, which allowed school boards to effect a development levy on new construction to pay for the school board's share of the cost of new schools. The school board's share would otherwise have to be funded from the operating budget, namely the mill rate. The Durham board implemented education development charges. It is concerned that if boards are "out of the taxation business" and the province assumes the full funding of education, it is likely that the authority to levy EDCs will be removed from the education sector. The EDC funds are required to be raised in 1998 through 2013 to pay for schools constructed prior to 1998. Without these funds, the province of Ontario would force the Durham Board of Education to be exposed to an

unfunded liability of approximately \$27 million. Will EDC funds continue to be available to address new pupil places in growth boards?

The bill indicates trustee representation for district school boards to be between five and 12. Representation by trustees for such a large and diverse area as the Durham board should be at the high end of that scale to adequately reflect the distinctive character of urban and rural through seven municipalities. Small-town and rural Ontario should not bear the brunt of downsizing. Trustee voices are needed to ensure local autonomy and representativeness throughout the new Durham district.

The role of the trustee as a locally elected member of a community, addressing local issues through the ability to raise dollars when necessary, has existed as a fundamental part of our democratic tradition. To relegate the trustee to a position of making choices, not decisions, to allocating fewer dollars for education programs and services without the ability to address local issues financially, is to decrease significantly the trustees' historical role in representing their electors. In a letter from the members of the Cartwright High School Community Council to the minister dated January 31, 1997, the support for trustees was expressed in the following way:

"We value the services and accessibility of our local trustee. With bigger government comes more remoteness and the feeling of isolation at the local school level. Please consider the need to reduce the number of trustees and the need for such low remuneration. We want trustees to feel that they are valued and appreciated."

1750

The Durham board has been able to set aside modest reserves to address specific needs. The decision over the years to have reserves must not be eliminated through 100% funding by the government. These funds raised from Durham taxpayers must be used within Durham to the benefit of students.

The role of the Education Improvement Commission in the transition to the new district school boards is well defined. If we understand it correctly, an appointed group will require, supervise, monitor, decide on, approve on, set parameters for and make recommendations to an elected group of trustees across this province. They will do these things with a staff to be hired for a four-year period, with a budget allocated for this. Is there a projected budget cost for the services of the EIC and the implementation of this bill? Will these expenses add to the out-of-classroom category of expenses? Will the EIC become a permanent level of bureaucracy?

The EIC is a shift away from the role and responsibility of the trustees to function. The bill indicates that the EIC will bring forward recommendations on strengthening the role of school councils and the feasibility of increasing parent involvement in education governance. The Durham board traditionally has supported increased involvement by parents and the community in schools, and developed a school council structure prior to policy memorandum 122. School council chairs have indicated a concern that they would be expected to fulfil the responsibilities of trustees, to fill the vacuum, and to do this they do not have the time or desire to go beyond the

advisory role. The EIC needs to listen carefully to the school council members and hear their comments on increased, centralized power by the Ministry of Education and Training within the appearance of more involvement at the local school level.

The district school boards, as created in 1998 under the act, will underrepresent their electorate and be toothless creatures, supplicants of the provincial treasury — complaint bureaus unable to raise funds or decide on a budget.

I would like to conclude this presentation on behalf of the Durham Board of Education with these final comments. Change is inevitable; however, it should be planned, inclusive and focused on students.

Bill 104 speaks of accountability, effectiveness and quality but reduces the accountability of locally elected representatives. It neither suggests how quality will be measured nor indicates which instruments will be used to measure or evaluate the effectiveness of legislation. The fiscal destination has not been identified. We have not heard how much education should cost, just that it is too expensive. Will quality be measured against an unknown financial measure?

In education we expect the modelling of learning throughout the learning continuum. The role of an unfettered, unelected body, the EIC, making decisions for locally elected officials betrays our history. When did local democratic practices end?

If there are fewer dollars with more power centrally and less locally, will programs and services disappear? Will outsourcing and privatization result in a decrease in the standard of education? The classroom already has been affected; what will be the new standard? How will these changes improve student learning?

We recognize that Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, is just one piece of restructuring of education. We are concerned about the funding of education and will apply to appear before you again on that topic when the legislation is available.

I thank you for your time. We've summarized the questions on the following page. Appendix A is an analysis of property tax increases. Appendix B is an analysis of the enrolment growth and per pupil grant decreases for the Durham board. Thank you.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you for being here and for using a good part of your brief to explode two of the myths that I think are driving these so-called reforms: one being that the system is broken, and your board's award is a clear counter to that; and the other that boards are out of control in terms of their funding. The blatant selective use and misuse of data by this minister to make that case is well refuted by the arguments and the reality you've presented in your brief.

You've raised a number of questions. I don't think there are answers to most of them. The development charges question we need to put on the record at the conclusion of this session. My question to you is just, do you see the role of school trustees even continuing given the fact that you'll become a complaints bureau and nothing more?

Mrs Schedlich: Yes, I do. I believe that will be a big part of it. The previous speaker talked about who would

run as a trustee. I would question the quality of people who would be available to run.

Mr Wildman: If I could attempt to answer some of your questions, why not? On page 5 you ask, "Is there a projected budget cost for the services of the EIC and the implementation of this bill?" As far as we can tell, no. "Will these expenses add to the out-of-classroom category of expenses?" Yes. "Will the EIC become a permanent level of bureaucracy?" Maybe.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you, Mr Wildman. Perhaps you could respond to the other questions we haven't had back from the government yet.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much, Ruth Ann and Bobbie, for appearing and taking the time today to come. It shows the dedication of not only the Durham board but the trustees in our area. I have the greatest respect for them.

I'd like to compliment the Bertelsmann activity, and I'll put it in the form of a question. You've said that you're one of the lowest-spending, largest boards. I read your material and press stuff and I'm well familiar with that, and you're to be commended for that. I guess I would put it to you this way: Do you think the funding model should start where the Durham board is, take it as a model board, world-recognized, and say, "Here's a board that doesn't spend any more than what the province considers to be a ceiling, to some extent," and start there?

Mrs Schedlich: To respond to that, John, in the past five years we have cut \$5 million each year from our budget. Last year we cut \$15 million. We personally believe we cut far too deeply. I'm hopeful that we're going to see a raise, that our grant structure will go up since we are so low-spending. I would certainly hope so.

Mr O'Toole: But you are world-recognized.

Mrs Schedlich: Absolutely.

Mr O'Toole: There's not enough money, I agree with you there.

Mrs Schedlich: We have cut too deeply in staff.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much for your thoughtful presentation.

Mr Wildman: Just as a point, there is another bill. The development charges bill, as you know, is part of the restructuring, the mega-week announcements. I would really encourage your board to make these points before the committee that deals with that legislation.

The Vice-Chair: Perhaps, Mr Wildman, you could share that with the delegation outside.

Mrs McLeod: I will pursue the same issue and ask it as a question for the parliamentary assistant to respond to. It's the first question raised by the board, "Will EDC funds continue to be available to address new pupil places in growth boards?" I would add to that, will the development charges that are now being levied and are required until 1998 still be levied to pay for existing construction?

The Vice-Chair: The questions are duly noted.

1800

DAVE CHAMBERS

DON BEATTY

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is David Chambers. Welcome, Mr Chambers. You have 10 minutes.

Mr Dave Chambers: My name is Dave Chambers. I'm a recently retired secondary school principal. I held that position for 15 years at the same school. Prior to that I served as vice-principal in two counties, Peel and Simcoe, for a total of 10 years. I hold degrees from Laurier, McMaster and the University of Toronto. I'm the co-author of a text. In my community, I am a past president of Rotary and Huronia Red Cross. I care about education and my community.

With me is Don Beatty.

Mr Don Beatty: By way of background, I worked for Imperial Oil in Calgary; I played professional football in Calgary and Hamilton; I ran a dairy farm for seven years; I served on municipal council in Brampton for six years; I taught in Fergus, Brampton and Simcoe county as a teacher; I was a vice-principal, a principal for 11 years and a superintendent for eight years.

We support the concept of the Fewer School Boards Act. Indeed, we believe that school boards should be eliminated entirely. We would replace their powers and authority by empowering the local school community, the parents and the staffs of schools. The funds made available could then go to schools and classrooms, where education really takes place. It is truly sad to think of the dollars that have been spent on salaries of administration and trustees over the last 28 years that could have been spent in classrooms.

Mr Chambers: The educational market is students and their parents, and they need to be in partnership with teachers making decisions about their schools. Only with such partnerships can we hope to have schools that are different, schools that focus on learning, schools that prepare children for a global economic and learning society.

School boards of today have distanced themselves from parents and teachers; they are restrictive; they discourage risk-taking; they are self-serving, concerned mainly with who should have access to knowledge and influence on decisions, rather than the content and practice of teaching and learning.

This was not always so. When I started teaching, here in Barrie, the board was made up of volunteer trustees. The agendas for their meetings were made up in conjunction with the two secondary school principals, who attended meetings as active participants. I was privileged to attend two such meetings. I was impressed with the flow of information and the knowledge these trustees had of their schools. These volunteer trustees had ownership of their schools. The parent councils of tomorrow could have the same knowledge and the same ownership. That depends upon your recommendations.

Several years later the board hired a superintendent, a fine person. However, with his hiring, a gap between schools and trustees was opened. Principals now had to submit items for approval to have them on the agenda. With the advent of county boards in 1969, this gap became a chasm.

Mr Beatty: When the Simcoe County Board of Education was formed, it shared a building with the separate school board. The total staff for both boards was approximately 50 people. There are now about 180 telephone extensions in the huge building next door housing the public school board.

Mr Chambers: Remoteness caused by layers of bureaucracy has disfranchised parents, principals and teachers. Today, boards are administratively oversized and autocratic.

Mr Beatty: In order to justify its existence, it is important for senior administration to supply the board members with evidence of hard work. I have here a program of studies for all subjects for public and separate school boards issued by the Ministry of Education prior to the county boards. As well, I have here the curriculum for mathematics for only grade 3, as developed by the Simcoe county public board.

Every board is responsible for providing curriculum for each subject. To do this, for each subject a subject council is formed, a steering committee is formed, a curriculum development committee is formed, an implementation committee is formed and an orientation committee is formed by the teachers out of their classrooms. Can you imagine the hours stolen from classrooms? Then multiply the process by 169, the number of boards at present in this province. My point is, it is preferable for teachers to be in the classrooms, guiding the learning process, to being at a meeting during school hours.

Meetings: How can we expect principals and vice-principals to be facilitators of learning when they are summoned to so many meetings? A teacher recently told me that a principal of that school came into a grade 12 class to talk to the teacher. When the principal left, the student asked who the visitor had been. It gives you some idea of the amount of time senior administration takes a principal out of the school.

Mr Chambers: You will probably be told by board representatives that they have downsized. A recent piece of information points out that the 1997 complement of superintendents will be 45% of what it was in 1993. However, it is my understanding that this 45% will still be twice the number of superintendents the same board had in 1973. I ask you, has this 100% increase improved learning in the classroom? Has it really made classroom conditions better to have 180 phone extensions to reach fewer than 100 schools?

As the bureaucracy grew, it began to see itself as the source of all information and decision-making, rather than as facilitators of learning. A couple of examples of how today it does not work: A few years ago secondary principals, after consulting with parents and teachers, presented their plan for grade 9 programming. A single superintendent rejected the plan without explanation, other than a memo starting with "I believe therefore...." The message to parents, teachers and school administration from senior administration is your beliefs, your research and your feelings are not important.

More recently, I wanted to install an extra chalkboard at our alternative school some five blocks away from the main campus. Despite having available the chalkboard, a truck, the tools, a teacher carpenter and willing staff to carry and hold, board policy required approval. Two weeks later, after the appropriate paperwork was completed and permission was granted by the appropriate supervisory officer, two employees from Barrie came the 45 kilometres to Midland to install the chalkboard.

These two examples of ignoring parents and teachers and the bureaucratic delay is demoralizing and unacceptable, but all too common. This is at a time when all research states that in reality institutions can no longer survive using the patriarchal, high-control systems of the past; instead, a redistribution of power and control must occur.

It is on this basis that we make the following recommendations to the government.

Mr Beatty: Eliminate boards and establish guidelines for site-based management of schools; direct per-pupil allocation of funds directly to individual schools; establish provincial curriculum, with the local schools responsible for delivery and structure; utilize the ministry's regional area offices to handle long-range planning for such things as the building of new schools.

Mr Chambers: You will be told there are insufficient parents willing to give the time and accept the responsibility of an empowered parent council. Nonsense. There are lots. They just don't wish to be used as fund-raisers. In Edmonton, the government made parents true partners in their children's education by empowering parent councils. They have no problems finding extra volunteers.

The Vice-Chair: You have slightly less than two minutes.

Mr Beatty: Reflecting on my career, I would have better served education and my students if, as a principal, I had always been available in the classroom and if, as a superintendent, my salary had been spent in the classroom. Voluntary school councils, in cooperation with principals, can provide the educational leadership needed in a community. It was done prior to 1969; it can be done again.

The Protestant separate school board in Penetanguishene has operated on this format since before Confederation. The same board had the lowest per-pupil cost in the province. I was at the Protestant separate school this week, a school of 250 students. They are in the process of renovating the board office to provide a room for their very first superintendent, whom they have just hired. No doubt they will another phone line.

They are also in the process of dropping junior kindergarten. You can imagine what that will do for education and what it will do for per-pupil cost. In Wales, where big school boards have been eliminated, a secondary school of 1,100 students was assigned 19 extra staff.

Mr Chambers: Gerald Caplan has said democracy cannot be served by enlarging boards and entrusting parents, yet can any of you tell me what could be more democratic than parents elected by their peers to deal directly with the staff and issues of their school?

Phones: Reference has been made to them several times. What should have been a single call took six weeks of paper chase to obtain the appropriate supervisory officer's approval to put a phone extension into the classroom of a handicapped teacher.

The Vice-Chair: Mr Chambers, please wrap up. You're past your time.

Mr Chambers: The present bureaucratic system is not working. We ask you to provide parents with the opportunity to be shareholders of their child's learning.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you, gentlemen. The clock has run out.

Applause.

The Vice-Chair: I remind the audience that there are no demonstrations of affection or otherwise permitted at committee hearings. There's no time left for questions.

1810

CLIFF MORRIS

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is Mr Cliff Morris. Welcome.

Mr Cliff Morris: Mr Chairman, members of the committee, I'm glad to have this opportunity to express in a fairly general way concerns about what is taking place in the move towards the Fewer School Boards Act. The designation of the act itself is an indication to me of the kind of abusive language that is occurring.

I note a number of other things about the use of language in education as it's being presented to us by the minister and the ministry. In this morning's Globe, for example, there's a reference to Ontario's — listen to it — Education Quality and Accountability Office. What a name for an office that has to do with the teaching of children at their very youngest ages. This was in reference, of course, to the testing and evaluation of grade 3 students in reading, writing and mathematics. Joan Green is described as the chief executive officer — note the business language that is coming into education — of the accountability office.

Rather than repeat some of the things that have been said in the last half-hour as I've been listening, I'd like to turn to a column by Michael Valpy of the Globe on January 17, where he refers to the presentation by John Kenneth Galbraith of the first annual Senator Keith Davey lecture at the University of Toronto. He says:

"Mr Galbraith spoke for the better part of an hour about the socially concerned people and others, a magnificent address given against the backdrop of Mike Harris's destruction of Red Tory Ontario. As the 88-year-old Mr Galbraith moved to his majestic climax, he spoke of the socially concerned people who began building the welfare state at the turn of the last century as a necessary response to urbanization, with its severing of family ties and secure employment.

"History dictated then that the welfare state be built," he said. "History today, recording the social and economic turmoil at the turn of this century, dictates that the welfare state be maintained. Those who would destroy it," he said, "are acting against history." He finished; he slammed shut what appeared to be a very expensive leather binder on his text. His voice had tired noticeably in his last few words. He had to be assisted from the stage. His audience, hushed for a moment, swelled to their feet and applauded and applauded and applauded."

We have been looking at what has happened in the name of the deficit against the smash-and-rip policies that rent the safety net beneath society's most vulnerable people, against the dismantling of environmental and other protective regulations, against the destruction of quality-of-life services and national social policy standards and against the retreat of the state from issues such

as early childhood education and regulated child care. I note that the proposed length of education has squeezed on both ends: We'll do away with the OAC possibilities, the 13th year, and we'll rule out early childhood education.

Governments and editorial writers have suddenly discovered child poverty, after years of campaigning by children's advocacy groups such as Campaign 2000 and other measures. I feel some concerns about what is developing, going back to the passing of the omnibus bill, Bill 104, the establishment of an Education Improvement Commission — these Orwellian names, these lofty names — to oversee the enormously complex job of cutting in half the number of province's school boards. I regret the authoritarian aspects of the bill in the powers of the EIC.

I am looking now at Gerald Caplan's editorial of February 14 in the Toronto Star: "In a real sense, existing school boards in Ontario have been put in receivership, with the role of democratically elected trustees summarily superseded by the unelected commission and its sweeping mandate." It goes on to describe the fine way of improving learning in Ontario that has been set out in Bill 104.

I recall Mr Snobelen's reference to manufacturing a crisis, inventing a crisis, and at the time he said that, he said, "Inventing crises is something we're not intuitively good at."

"So how do you make 'enormous change' happen? 'It's very brave work, you have to have an enormous amount of courage...you have to go through all kinds of false starts, mess, morass, nastiness...it's ugly. The only thing uglier...is living in a survival mode.'"

Then Caplan says: "Now it finally fits together. The 'enormous change' needed is that Snobelen must wring an extra billion dollars from the education system to help pay for...tax cuts to the wealthy."

The Vice-Chair: Mr Morris, you have under two minutes to complete.

Mr Morris: Thank you. In looking back over a heap of press clippings that I have kept over the last two years, I'm heartened by the efforts that are being made at local levels to coalesce in opposition to what is developing. I'll stop there, Mr Chairman.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much, sir. We have really only one minute left, so rather than questions or comments, we'll just move on to the next delegation. Thank you for your time and for attending today.

1820

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES UNION, LOCAL 330

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Board of Education, Local 330, Michael Forgie, president.

Mr Michael Forgie: I'd like to begin by thanking the committee for hearing our submission. My name is Michael Forgie and I am president of Local 330 of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union. With me in the background are several members of my local who are seated in the audience.

Our local represents approximately 700 OPSEU members who work for the Simcoe County Board of Education. These members are all non-teaching personnel under the classification of support staff and include educational assistants, elementary and secondary office staff, technicians and board staff. Most of these members are also parents and have a twofold interest in what this bill can mean to them. Our board was fortunate, with the exception of our French-language board, that we were not amalgamated with another school board.

This presentation focuses on the issues in Bill 104 that most directly affect the lives of the 3,500 OPSEU members who work in Ontario's education system. These members are deeply concerned about the process being put in place for mergers and amalgamations and the attack on our public education system. As time does not permit us to give a presentation on all of these issues we would like to address, we urge the government to take into account the concerns of the practitioners in the field represented by the other unions, federations and groups like the Ontario Education Alliance.

Our two major concerns with Bill 104 are with outsourcing and successor rights. We are also concerned with the overall provisions of this bill.

Section 335(3)(f) of Bill 104 provides that the Education Improvement Commission shall "consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on how to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services to district school boards." We are particularly concerned with the provision of Bill 104 which mandates outsourcing or contracting out of non-instructional positions, non-instructional jobs. This is the beginning of privatization of our school system. It really does discount the importance of support staff in our education system and the role they play in assisting teachers, principals and vice-principals in providing a good school atmosphere for our students.

What about the quality of non-instructional services? Does it matter if a contract agency handles our special education students as is currently done by our educational assistants? Does it matter if a contract agency handles student reports and staffs school and board offices? Yes, it does. Ontario's students deserve the best possible environment in which to learn. They deserve reliable, well-trained, well-treated staff in schools.

The problems associated with outsourcing in education, health care and other sectors show that service invariably suffers. Lower-paid and insecure staff have a high turnover rate, which can be detrimental when dealing with students.

If private companies take over non-instructional services, the companies' need to make a profit will dictate that there will be fewer jobs provided. They will pay less and they will not provide the benefits and fair working conditions that inspire loyalty and consistency in staff.

In the Common Sense Revolution, the government boasted that it would create 725,000 jobs during its term in office. This would mean 145,000 jobs for each year over the five-year term. In 1995, only 71,000 jobs were created. In 1996, it would appear that 80,000 jobs were created, and of these 45,000 were part-time. Just how will outsourcing help the employment picture when one of the

first things a private contractor will do is cut jobs? This doesn't make sense.

There is a very serious question around the safety of kids if we have people who work on short-term contracts in a school and we don't know who they might be. We must remember that this government is closing psychiatric hospitals on a grand scale, and it is possible for a psychotic person to get work at some agency that didn't screen its workforce. That agency could in turn obtain a contract to service a school. This is a very serious concern and I think we must look at it very carefully.

The health and safety factor, which parents are very concerned with, will be threatened by the fact that strangers will be in and out of the school, and cleaning materials that are absolutely hazardous to the health of children will be used by an untrained workforce.

Support staff are often the first people students see when they arrive at school. They are often the first person to spot an intruder in a school. All support staff are known and respected members of the school staff and add a certain degree of security to a school because they know who should or should not be there. Temporary or transitory contract workers would not know who should or shouldn't be allowed in a school. In addition, teaching staff would not know if a person was a contract employee or was someone who just happened to be walking in from the street.

We must emphasize that by seeking to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services, this government will be risking the very safety of our children in Ontario schools. Parents and communities want support staff in their schools that they know. They do not, for instance, want unknown people from a private, for-profit cleaning company to have contact with students.

"Outsourcing," the new term for contracting out, will not solve the problems associated with the cuts to education imposed by the province and the reluctance of trustees to raise the necessary funds to maintain quality education. The belief that contracting out such services as office and clerical, educational assistants and technicians will provide the same range and quality of services at a lower cost is strictly that: a belief. Private companies promise quality service at bargain rates but the service will never live up to the previous standards set by board employees.

Private companies generally low-ball on their bid in the first year. Often private companies will require the contractee to replace older equipment, with substantially higher costs, and possibly force the board to fund training for employees. Eventually the board will end up with inferior service at a similar or higher cost. The community will suffer because private corporations will attempt to provide the minimum standard of service in the cheapest way, usually with fewer workers. The local community will lose out because of the lower salaries and benefits for workers in the area. The lower the wage, the lower the spending. Such an economic strategy is simply unacceptable, especially in a province where the real unemployment rate stands at 14.2% if you take into account the discouraged worker data.

Private employers will try to shave costs by cutting back service, and everyone — teachers, students, support

staff and administrators — will have to pick up the slack. More time will be spent on picking up that slack than learning. Public sector employees are often able to achieve a higher standard of service. They are more responsive and flexible to changing circumstances. Private contractors will stick to their contracts and only go beyond if paid extra.

Labour relations will deteriorate because private contractors are not party to the collective agreements that cover the employees that the private contractor has been hired to manage. Employees are often treated like cogs in a contracting-out machine rather than valuable workers.

Plain and simple, everyone loses but the contractor. By giving up day-to-day operations, a school board will give up much of the control over the quality of services. Private firms are accountable only to their shareholders and the bottom line is their chief concern.

OPSEU believes that the process underlying Bill 104 and the education finance reforms will undermine school board bargaining with educational workers. How will the hundreds of collective agreements between school boards and employees be dealt with? Who will represent the newly merged employees who are currently represented by different bargaining agents? These are questions that should have been considered before embarking on this bill.

The hardship that may result: This committee must consider the many issues which can arise out of the various mergers and then bring down recommendations. To facilitate this process will require a separate set of hearings to analyse what can possibly occur. To do otherwise would do a great disservice to the staff, students and the community.

If a dispute arises, OPSEU believes that it would have to be settled using procedures outlined in the Ontario Labour Relations Act and by practices established by the Canadian Labour Congress.

We maintain that there must be provisions to ensure that staff are guaranteed the retention of all rights and entitlements held under existing collective agreements. This committee should include as part of its recommendations that there be full and timely disclosure of all relevant information by government and school boards to employee bargaining units; that there be an active role for bargaining units equal to that of school boards in all discussions with respect to employment or other matters related to school board reduction/amalgamation; that current employees be guaranteed job protection; that there be full recognition of accrued seniority; that employees be entitled to the form of contract to which they would have been entitled if there had been no school board reduction or amalgamation; that there be full recognition of category placement and experience; that there be full recognition of vested benefits, ie, sick leave credits and service gratuities; that there be protection regarding maximum distance for involuntary transfer.

OPSEU believes that all affected staff should be treated fairly and equitably. It is our position that prior to the establishment of any board amalgamation which may result in new bargaining units, employees should be guaranteed specific protection.

1830

When Egerton Ryerson founded our school system in the 1840s, Ontario's provincial government recognized that local schools would be the foundation of our province's social, economic and political development. To help them meet their mandate, the province shared its constitutional responsibility for education with locally elected and accountable school boards. To ensure stability of funding, boards were given the unique power to set a local mill rate for educational purposes. This power was independent of that of other local governing bodies. Municipal councils were obligated by law to pass on unaltered the mill rate struck by the local board of education. In these ways, the province ensured that the interests of the province's children were respected and protected.

The real purpose of privatization and outsourcing is to enable governments and school boards to cut salaries, eliminate benefits and break unions. It is a means of imposing losses on public employees. Privatization and outsourcing will enable the government to cut back services and allow privateers to skim off the best clients. The real message and design is to break public sector unions and employees and to cut back services.

The Ontario Public Service Employees Union is deeply concerned that Bill 104 is, in reality, a vehicle that allows total provincial control of local education for purposes of spending reductions. To any measures that lead in that direction, OPSEU is firmly opposed.

Bill 104 represents a serious threat to our children, to our schools, to our communities and therefore to our future as a democratic society. This bill is so fundamentally flawed in so many areas that it must be withdrawn in its entirety. We will not be satisfied by minor tinkering or amendments. We want it to be withdrawn completely.

In closing, I would like you to remember back to the days when you were in public school. I am sure you recall the custodian. I am sure you recall the secretary in the front office and the things she did over and beyond typing. These support personnel provided you with a security and a sense of stability that eased your learning process. Please consider this short submission along with the hundreds of others which say, "The system isn't broken, so don't break it."

Please don't sacrifice the future of our children in Ontario because you've made a horrible mistake on Bill 104 and you don't know how to amend it. We can give you lots of suggestions on what to do, the simplest of which of course is to withdraw the bill completely. All of this is respectfully submitted.

Ms Lankin: We're pleased to have you here and very pleased to have the presentation. The section of the legislation that you refer to with respect to contracting out was one that surprised me, because it says that the Education Improvement Commission shall "consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on how to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services." There's no discretion there, there's no examination and there's no research to find out whether or not it is advisable or more cost-effective. You referred to many studies, and I'm aware of a lot of these, that have shown

that in fact it isn't more cost-effective and it isn't better in terms of quality of work. Could you share your sense of some of that with the committee?

Mr Forgie: One of the things that comes to mind that I didn't mention, which is in this report, is Servicemaster. Servicemaster is on record currently right now as being one of the companies that has coercively made their employees perform work prior to their actual time of going on work. Just let me find the section. They have also made their employees pick up more work than they had previously done. So that's one of the bases of the contracting out.

Mr Froese: Thank you for your presentation. I met with a number of your colleagues in my riding, CUPE in particular, and we had a good conversation. There wasn't the normal rhetoric that is done by so many CUPE locals, probably because we knew each other fairly well, and we discussed this issue at length.

I have some sympathy with respect to the outsourcing, and like I said before, we discussed it at length. When we do look at that, and we are, according to the bill — and there's latitude for the Education Improvement Commission to look at that — in my opinion there are some things that can be outsourced and there are probably some things that can't be, but would you agree with the statement, "The best possible service for the best possible price for the best deal to the taxpayer"?

Mr Forgie: Not necessarily, because what you're looking at there is the monetary aspect and not necessarily the aspect of the student. I think the biggest problem with outsourcing, and I stated it already, is that the lower-paid worker is not going to be as consistent as — and I'm definitely not saying we're higher-paid workers, because we're not, but at least there is consistency with us because we are earning a wage that matches what we want to earn. When you start bringing the monetary aspect into it, you're not looking at the student's concern, and that is our concern.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate the comprehensiveness of your brief. You've dealt with a lot of issues. I too am going to come back to an item at least related to outsourcing. I appreciate the emphasis that you and others who have presented have placed on how important it is to have that continuity of personnel who understand the school setting; how important that is to students.

I think the outsourcing issue may be even superseded by what we read in the *Globe and Mail* or in the *Star* today, that we've been concerned about for some time, which is that the government may be negotiating a turnover of all school capital construction, school maintenance, perhaps secretarial staff and school busing to the municipalities themselves. I would just ask you to comment on what guarantees there would be that there would be any continuity of personnel, let alone the dollars that are now going into support being maintained.

Mr Forgie: I would say once again, you do run into that problem of continuity. At least when you have one employer, you generally have one wage and that wage promotes the continuity of a person staying at their job.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much. We appreciate your being here this evening.

GREATER BARRIE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the Canadian Union of Public Employees. Oh, I apologize. I looked at the wrong one. It's the Greater Barrie Chamber of Commerce, David Wismer, second vice-president. I apologize for calling that out of order. Sorry about that. CUPE, you're up next. Run me out of town.

Mr David Wismer: I'm not sure that the chamber of commerce wants to be — we have a different philosophy than CUPE, I think.

The Vice-Chair: Welcome, Mr Wismer. I apologize. I was reading the wrong name on the list. It's been a long day. You have 15 minutes, sir. You can use the entire time or you can leave time for questions from the three caucuses. Please begin.

Mr Wismer: I'll be quick for whatever questions. As you've just received our deputation, I'll read it into the record.

My name is David E. Wismer. I am the chair of our governmental affairs committee and the second vice-president of the chamber. On behalf of the Greater Barrie Chamber of Commerce, I would like to thank you for giving us this opportunity to speak on this very important bill.

Since we are a business-related organization, we feel strongly that governments need traditional fiscal values and responsibilities in producing bottom-line results. It is our opinion that this bill goes a long way in achieving those objectives. The reduction of school boards across the province will provide significant savings at little social cost in the classroom. Also, combining the various French-language boards, sections and advisory committees into 11 boards should give that part of our provincial population a better governance system.

The Education Improvement Commission will have its work cut out for it. It would appear that the time factor will work against them in organizing the new boards etc to meet the January 1, 1998, deadline. However, it is our view that that deadline should be kept. The ministry in the past has given indications that it was going to proceed in a certain direction and then changed its mind. An example of this would be the deliberations around the so-called toolkit.

1840

There are several specific sections of the legislation which we draw your attention to. Section 341 restricts the powers of existing boards. This is obviously a good requirement, but in a fast-growing community like Barrie it may cause some problems if the commission is not flexible in its thinking. Also, section 342, subsection (8), seems a little draconian. It would appear that 14 days is not sufficient time to complete any meaningful report; perhaps by the end of the month would be more appropriate.

In the preamble to the bill, the words "accountability," "effectiveness" and "quality" are used. It is our suggestion that benchmarks be placed in the bill to give meaning to these words. As an example, an annual report to the Legislature by the Minister of Education should be mandated on the state of education in the province. This would be similar in stature to the budget speech. This

would allow the public to have a dialogue on the matters at hand and give the government a more focused direction to the objectives that were stated by the minister.

In conclusion, we believe the bill to be an excellent start in reforming the educational system. There are still a number of items on the administrative and operational side, such as pupil-teacher ratios, change of school year, designated management and union membership, curriculum etc that have to be reviewed so that the province remains competitive in the world marketplace.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Mr Tascona: I'll take up part of the time perhaps. It's good to see you here, Mr Wismer. You have a little bit of political experience, having been on Barrie council, and perhaps you can share with us. As you know, Barrie is a fast-growing community, and you said it may cause some problems if the commission is not flexible. Do you want to just elaborate on what those problems might be?

Mr Wismer: As we understood the bill, the commission obviously has to direct the affairs in the transitional period of the existing boards to the new boards. In section 341 it goes through a lot of things that existing boards should not do after their budgets are processed for this coming year. I think there was one example that nothing could be changed in expense items over \$50,000. It may come to pass that there's some land to be bought or opportunities that present themselves, and with the appeal process the board has to go back to the commission in order to make a difference on this \$50,000 requirement, then the commission has to act fairly quickly if they want the best bang for the dollar. It's not necessarily going to be a big problem, because most of those types of development things are done, obviously, over longer time periods, but there may be some decisions that come up that were not able to be fully explained in the 1997 budget that wouldn't get decided on under the present arrangement.

Mr Tascona: With respect to outsourcing, and you may have heard the previous presentation, as a principle the chamber obviously believes that if it's appropriate, outsourcing should be considered in non-instructional areas. Do you share that belief?

Mr Wismer: Oh, yes. I think your colleague expressed it earlier on, that we're all trying to get the best bang for the dollar.

Mr McLean: I have a question for you, Mr Wismer, and it concerns the number of board members we have. In six other provinces, they've reduced their school boards by an average of 61%, including every Liberal government. In Newfoundland, they've gone from 27 to 10; in PEI, from five to three; in Nova Scotia, from 22 to seven; New Brunswick has gone from 42 to zero; in Alberta, from 181 to 57; the proposal in Quebec is 158 to 70. What would your reaction be to what they've done in other provinces and what they're doing here in Ontario?

Mr Wismer: It's our view that the children in the other provinces appear to be getting as good an education as we have in Ontario with a smaller number of boards. I don't know why Ontario children would be any different than anybody in Newfoundland or any of the other provinces.

Mrs McLeod: Before getting into the area I wanted to chat with you about, I should note for the record that while public boards and separate boards are indeed being amalgamated and reduced in number, there's actually an expansion of French-language boards from, I think, the existing four to 11.

Mr Wismer: That's correct, yes.

Mrs McLeod: The area I want to ask you about is the companion piece to Bill 104, and I raise it because it was part of what the minister spoke of when he introduced Bill 104 to the Legislature. It's his intention to take education off the residential property tax and to pay 100% of the cost of education. In my home community, the chamber of commerce has expressed a great deal of concern about what that will do to business taxes locally and particularly to small business, because they continue to pay the commercial tax and it will be levied in some way by the Ministry of Education, which is the first time that we'll have direct provincial taxation of local properties. Of course the businesses will also have to pay their normal share of the costs that have been offloaded as a result of the transfer, the price that's paid for taking the tax off the residential property. Is that a concern for the local chamber as well, the effect of that increased business tax on local businesses?

Mr Wismer: Not per se. I think our constituents or membership will only get concerned if the actual value is more than what they're paying now. Obviously, if a business is paying X number of dollars and all of a sudden that's going to go up by 20%, then sure, there's going to be some squawking about that. But it's not our understanding that that's the theory behind it. In other words, everything is supposed to stay level.

Mrs McLeod: The government believes the overall may stay level, although I would be prepared to debate that, but with businesses there's no question the business continues to pay the \$2 billion-plus.

Mr Wismer: But they're saying that now, aren't they?

Mrs McLeod: Yes, but on top of that the businesses in each community then have to take that community's share of the increased costs. It's to be a revenue-neutral shift, supposedly, but the part that gets shifted back to the municipalities gets spread between the business base and the residential base. It's possible — I doubt it — that taxes would go down for residences, but for businesses they can't do anything but go up unless there's a massive reduction in the services, in the housing costs, long-term care, all of the services that are being shifted. Otherwise, it's virtually inevitable that business taxes would go up.

Mr Wismer: That may come to pass. At least here in Barrie, we're waiting to see how bad it's going to be, if it is going to be bad. Where we're coming from is that, as we mentioned in our opening statement, we have to try to be fiscally responsible, so we have to give the government a crack at it. Like any set of constituents, if they haven't got it right, then obviously things are going to go for the high jump, aren't they? But until they do, I'm not sure we're going to worry about it.

1850

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much for your presentation. At the outset you say that the reduction of school boards across the province will provide significant

savings at little social cost in the classroom. I guess you mean in terms of the education of the kids.

These are government figures, Mr Snobelen's figures. The total expenditure on education per annum in Ontario is \$13.5 billion, approximately. Mr Snobelen also says that the savings accruing from the passage of Bill 104 will be \$150 million, which is a lot of money but works out to a little over 1%. So it won't be that much going back into the classroom, even if it all goes back into the classroom. The other concern is that he has also indicated that he wishes to take more money out of education, so the question is whether or not it will go into the classroom.

Mr McLean mentioned other jurisdictions, and I would point out just in passing that there are fewer students in all of New Brunswick than there are in the city of Toronto. But in other jurisdictions where amalgamations have taken place, and where studies in Ontario have been done about amalgamations, they've indicated that the actual cost of bureaucratic operations goes up, not down, in bigger organizations. I'm wondering about that. What you were just saying to my colleague from Fort William was that we should see what happens, and if it doesn't work out, then we'll have to fix it after.

Mr Wismer: From a business point of view, the way we look at it is that if there's a problem — and I think the problem here is balancing the budget — what do we do to solve that problem? One of the areas of solving that problem is doing something with the education and doing the downloading and all that neat stuff. It's analogous to a company that finds itself in the same position, where the revenue is not equalling the outgo and so you've got to try something. It may or may not work. Look at Eaton's. They're trying something.

Mrs McLeod: That's a bit of a scary analogy.

Mr Wismer: They may come out of it, but the latest thing on those guys is that they're going to sell the place, they're going to sell the stores. Maybe that's not the greatest analogy, but my point is that you've got to try something. The problem and the debate that goes around it at this table is that we're all debating whether something is correct, and to some extent none of us around here really knows for sure. But the reality of it is that the government has the ability at this stage of the game to give something a whirl.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much. I'm sorry to cut you off, but we've used up our time.

CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES, LOCAL 1310

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is CUPE, represented by President Stan Janes and past president of Local 1310, Jackie Pitocco.

Mr Stan Janes: My name is Stan Janes. I am president of CUPE Local 1310. With me is Jackie Pitocco. She is the past president of CUPE Local 1310, and she is now our public relations officer. She'll be sharing some of our time with you. I'd like to thank you for hearing our presentation on Bill 104.

CUPE Local 1310 represents approximately 400 maintenance and custodial employees in the Simcoe

County Board of Education. Our maintenance employees are licensed personnel, trained in confined space, WHMIS, health and safety, and fire and tornado procedures. We also assist in fire drills and are on 24-hour call to the security service that monitors the school buildings.

Our custodial employees are the first to arrive at the schools in the mornings and they're among the last to leave in the evenings. We strive to maintain a clean, healthy and safe environment for the students and teachers in our schools. Our duties include, but are not limited to, changing fluorescent lights, checking the water supply and fixing flush valves, fixing broken desks and equipment to save the school money, painting, washing furniture, cleaning walls, washing and waxing areas to make them safe for everyone and meeting the needs of community groups using the school premises.

Many of us have worked in the schools for several years. The children know us and feel safe at school with us there. In short, we are an integral component of the school community. Our members are very much a part of the communities they live in, as well as members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 1310.

In July 1995, John Snobelen publicly stated his intention to invent a crisis in Ontario's education system, a crisis that would justify the kind of radical reforms his government wanted to make. Not surprisingly, our schools have come under a constant barrage of criticism ever since the charges were made. Each one of them is disputable: Education spending is out of control; too much money is being spent outside the classrooms; our students are graduating without a good education; teachers are overpaid and have too much control over education. I wish they could see the teachers, the secretaries and the custodial services that I see; they might change their minds on that.

Bill 104 is nothing more than the predictable outcome of this propaganda campaign. If Bill 104 is passed, the government will begin to exert a new control over Ontario's education system, starting with the establishment of the undemocratic Education Improvement Commission.

Bill 104 is the government's first big step down the road of privatizing Ontario's schools. First, non-instructional services will be outsourced. Next, no doubt, will come the handing over of construction and maintenance of schools to the private sector, then charter schools and, finally, privatization of curriculum and even teaching, as exists south of the border.

CUPE Local 1310 does not believe that our public education system is broken. At least, it's not broken yet; it will be if this government gets its way. In fact, we wonder if that might just be the agenda: Break the system, then use the public dissatisfaction that is created to build public support for a private system.

This presentation will focus on the issues in Bill 104 that most directly touch the lives of the 400 CUPE Local 1310 members who work for the Simcoe County Board of Education. This is not to say that CUPE Local 1310 is not deeply concerned about the process being put in place for mergers and amalgamation, the government's intention to control and reform curriculum or the government's

attack on the province's teachers. But time does not permit us to give a presentation on all the issues we would like to address, and we urge the government to take into account the concerns of the teacher unions and other employee groups, as well as our own.

1900

Bill 104 is an attack on jobs. Bill 104 is an attack on jobs in every community across the province. The Education Improvement Commission will be mandated to recommend to the government how to — not whether or not to, but how to — outsource all non-instructional services in the system.

It would appear that the privatization of tens of thousands of decent jobs is based on the government's constant contention that too much money is being spent outside the classroom on services like caretaking, maintenance and the school administrative services. It sounds like this government would like to return to the time of the one-room school house when students walked all those miles through minus 40 degree weather to get to school, the teacher swept the classroom, lit the wood stove in the winter, and the nice neighbours would shovel the snow, repair the roof and do any painting that was necessary. Students would never be bothered by intrusive school psychologists, speech therapists, guidance counsellors or special education assistants. And of course there were no phones and no photocopiers, so there was no need for expensive school secretaries. In fact, in those good old days, the system was probably run pretty cheaply.

Are the many services available in today's system worth the extra costs? Of course they are. We have a world-class education system, as was attested to when the Durham Board of Education and Sinclair Secondary School were awarded the prestigious Bertelsmann Prize for excellence in education last fall. These are not the only world-class boards or schools in the province. Our system is world-class because it is public and it has developed good processes of governance and accountability.

If the government is not suggesting that we can do without these important services in our schools, then what they must be saying is that employees should do these jobs for lower wages and in worse working conditions. This is an unacceptable job strategy by anyone's standards. The average CUPE Local 1310 member supports a family on less than \$24,000 a year. CUPE Local 1310 members believe our education system and their jobs are worth defending.

Bill 104 is an attack on services. What about the quality of non-instructional services? Does it matter if private companies clean the school, maintain and repair the plumbing and the boilers? In CUPE Local 1310's and the Simcoe County Board of Education's experience, it very much does.

We can cite two examples in the Simcoe County Board of Education — Birchview Dunes and the schools in Base Borden — where the maintenance and custodial services were contracted out and subsequently brought back in-house, as a comparative study demonstrated that our members could provide higher quality service in a

more efficient manner. We feel the Simcoe county board proved what we were worth.

Ontario's students deserve the best possible environment in which to learn. In fact, studies have shown that students do better in clean and comfortable learning environments. They also deserve reliable, well-trained and well-treated staff in their schools.

CUPE's experience with privatization in the education, health care and municipal sectors shows that service invariably suffers. Buildings are not as clean. Lower-paid and insecure staff have a higher turnover. Sometimes contractors go out of business, leaving the public to pick up the tab. Ironically, it can often cost more, not less, to contract out public services. Time and again we have seen that privatization is done only for ideological reasons, not because it provides better service and not because it costs less.

I'm going to turn the rest of this presentation over to Jackie Pitocco.

Ms Jackie Pitocco: When the Harris government attacks jobs, it attacks communities too. Yes, there will be private sector jobs in the schools if private companies take over non-instructional services, but the need to make a profit will dictate that there will be fewer jobs provided, they will pay less and they will not provide the benefits and fair working conditions that inspire loyalty and consistency in staff.

Taking money out of the pockets of workers takes money out of local economies around the province. Consumer confidence is already low. If Bill 104 is passed, landlords will find usually reliable tenants suddenly not able to pay their rent, banks will have former school board employees defaulting on mortgages and local retailers will see business fall. Such an economic strategy is simply unacceptable, especially in a province where the real unemployment rate stands at 14.2%.

Privatization will not only take money out of Ontario's local economies. Currently, large, American-based companies are best positioned to profit from the sudden and massive privatization of non-instructional services in Ontario's schools. Contracts with these companies will siphon taxpayers' money out of the local economy, the region and even the country.

Bill 104: the attack on democratic institutions. CUPE Local 1310 is very concerned about the establishment of the Education Improvement Commission. It seems that the government is unwilling to take full responsibility for the changes it is about to unleash on our schools. Instead, an unelected and unaccountable body will take over what should be the responsibility of elected politicians at both the provincial and local levels.

The North American free trade agreement and current negotiations on the agreement on internal trade also present serious considerations that must be taken into account. Provisions in NAFTA make it virtually impossible for services that have been privatized to be taken back into the public service, whether or not privatization works out. Once the AIT is expanded to include local government sectors, there is reason to believe that these provisions will also apply to school boards. If total privatization of non-instructional services were not to

work out, boards could only take this work back in-house if the companies involved were financially compensated for all lost business now and in the future. Obviously the cost of taking the work back into the public sector would be prohibitive.

Conclusion and recommendations: Will Bill 104 "improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system," as it promises? No, nor is that the government's obvious intent. Bill 104 is designed to start privatizing large portions of the education system while giving the provincial government the control it needs to continue on that path, whether through charter school legislation, sale of schools to the private sector etc.

CUPE Local 1310 members will not stand by while their jobs are being eliminated. We will fight to maintain the high-quality services we provide and to defend the wellbeing of the communities we live in.

Our recommendations:

Reaffirm the need for the public delivery of education, acknowledging that a public system is more efficient and more equitable.

Defeat Bill 104 and engage in true consultation with stakeholders.

If meaningful consultation with stakeholders still results in school board amalgamation, establish a process that protects jobs, put fair workforce adjustment programs in place and protect the public delivery of all aspects of the system.

Return accountability to the hands of elected representatives — MPPs and trustees — not the unelected and unaccountable Education Improvement Commission and education improvement committees.

Ensure that elected boards of education are stronger, not weaker, and more accountable, not less.

Invest more, not less, in our public education system.

Finally, we would like to know where our local elected politicians stand on outsourcing services and just how it would improve our education system. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much. You've used up the entire time allocated.

1910

SIMCOE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the Simcoe County Board of Education, Lynda Murtha, chair. Welcome.

Mrs Lynda Murtha: Thank you, Mr Chair. As you have already mentioned, I am Lynda Murtha, the chair of the Simcoe County Board of Education. I'm also the trustee for Essa township. With me is trustee Gwen-Anne Walker who serves the Midland area. Our presentation will be brief because we would like to allow you the majority of our time to ask questions and hopefully we'll have all the right answers.

I will ask you to disregard the opening statement in our written presentation as we were not on the original agenda, so therefore prepared a written presentation, but after a few conversations with the clerk we did manage to get a space, so thank you.

Actually Trustee Walker has, on behalf of the board, compiled our presentation tonight. She has coordinated it,

she's talked with individual trustees, and hopefully has represented a wide variety of opinions. As you heard from our first speaker of the day today, we do not feel unanimously in our board towards our presentation, but certainly an overwhelming majority of the board, by motion, has passed this presentation. So at this point I'll turn it over to Gwen-Anne Walker and hopefully have lots of time for questions.

Mrs Gwen-Anne Walker: I'm a single parent of two daughters, both of whom were educated in this county and both of whom are university graduates. I am a retired secondary school teacher. I served two terms on the municipal council in Midland, and I am now of course a trustee for the Simcoe County board. I think this perception and perspective entitles me not to be called a whiner. I realize it is a perception and perspective not necessarily shared by the perpetrators of the bill, but I do feel strongly.

On the political front, accepted opinions are not only inhibiting to the mind, they contain the very source of error. When a political ideology is universally accepted by the élite, it is high time free men were fighting it.

We are questioning certain elements of Bill 104 at this point because we feel that accepted opinions — the waste, the overspending, the deterioration of the educational system — are in error. That is not to say there is no room for improvement. We all agree that some change is necessary and/or good, including a reasonable reduction in the number of trustees and boards. But as trustees elected by the people, we are questioning the lack of planning, vision and time presently available to make these changes tenable. We also strongly oppose the concept and mandate of the Education Improvement Commission.

We refer to a lack of planning because no details have been forthcoming: number of trustees per board, salaries of staff and committees to serve the EIC, future funding models. There is the feeling that there is no real comprehension of the magnitude of these changes, and the limbo month of December 1997 is but one example. Strategic planning must include real consultation which is an absolute basis for effective change. For example, we in Simcoe county provided a massive consultative process which resulted in the acceptance of year-round education pilot schools, yet the ministry shies away from a comprehensive consultative process, which admittedly does take time, with the very people who are on the front lines. Has anyone really researched the outsourcing of services with regard to the real results in our schools? One solution may not be practicable for all boards. We, for instance, have found already that it does not work.

It is also difficult to accept the vision of someone who seemed to project a negative attitude from the beginning. The vision includes — no details are given — further empowering of school councils. From the feedback given to us, most parents are besieged enough with volunteer, family and personal commitments that they do not want further demands on their time and energy. There seems to be no recognition of the fact that the world has changed since Leave It To Beaver, when simplicity was attainable and everybody volunteered. Because of the increased workload, geographical territory and decrease

in honorarium, the position of trustee will look much less attractive to the beleaguered public. It might have been better to point out the many exemplary practices of school boards in this province, and encourage others to adopt these in order to effect the positive changes that are necessary.

This government has formed an extraordinary commission which has a limitless budget by virtue of its limitless power to hire services and appoint committees. It supplants the very bureaucracy already expert and, although decimated, already in place, which it seems determined to eliminate. It is appointed, not elected, its power absolute and it is above the law. For much authority is the end of freedom.

Other trustee opinions include — and these are our trustees — the often-repeated belief that one publicly funded school system with allowances for special requirements would have really been beneficial in terms of governance change. Another is a reluctance to see our French-language section separated from us at a time when Canada is so desperately trying to reconcile its two identities. One trustee suggested that Simcoe county is a microcosm of Canada; fortunately a microcosm where French and English work together.

Another generally held opinion is that as well as local representation being eroded, a strong feature of our system, local control, will cease to exist because of lack of financial control under the new funding model. He who pays the piper calls the tune. There is a real fear in the community that educational equity is at stake. Although all boards will hopefully receive sufficient grants to maintain equity, the amounts may not be sufficient to provide the standard expected, and equity in education will therefore depend on the local community's ability to fund-raise.

The oldest problem of political philosophy is to justify authority without destroying the independence of human beings in the process. The theory of checks and balances translates into practical terms the concept of equilibrium that is inseparable from freedom in the realm of ideas. This presentation is an attempt to create a counterbalance to legislation which seems to ignore appropriate checks and balances and a true sense of accountability.

On behalf of the Simcoe County Board of Education, I would leave you with one further thought: While social transactions form the real picture of any civilized society, education is singular, irreplaceable and not to be matched by any other social transaction.

The Vice-Chair: We have approximately two minutes per caucus.

Mrs McLeod: Even leaving us time for questions, there's still not enough. I'm going to try to ask you three fairly straightforward questions as quickly as I can. You noted the concerns about the EIC, which we all have in terms of their power being above the law. You're not being amalgamated. Why do you think the EIC has to be given control over you as locally elected trustees when there are essentially no amalgamations taking place?

Mrs Murtha: Mrs McLeod, that's our question. However, they certainly do have the powers. We are currently in the middle of our budget process, which is why I've been coming in and out today and will be

leaving directly from here, because we are having a budget meeting next door. The simple fact that we find ourselves quite frankly in a very difficult position this year — we are now at the point of a \$23-million shortfall — the fact that that will have to be approved and may be amended and may not be approved, that to us alone; the fact that we are a very rapidly growing board here in Simcoe county and have several capital projects on the go, and now they are in some stage of limbo in that we are receiving very contradictory information as to whether or not we'll go ahead with those. So you're absolutely right, we have the same kinds of questions, that we are not being amalgamated but in actual fact we are having some restrictions.

I must say we are grateful that we are not being amalgamated. We have certainly heard from our neighbouring boards that are of the difficulties and of the extreme financial burden this will be on them. So we are truly grateful that we are not.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much for your presentation. Could I ask, in regard to your comments about consultation — and you ask why the ministry shies away from it — do you have any ideas about what is the rush? Why does this have to be done in eight months? Other jurisdictions have in fact amalgamated school boards: British Columbia, Alberta and so on. British Columbia took three years to do it, not eight months. Do you have any idea why there's such a rush here?

Mrs Murtha: Thank you, Mr Wildman, for the question. I honestly don't know. Certainly we can speculate and we can crystal-ball, and certainly the prospect of a provincial election in the not-too-distant future perhaps may be — but I don't have the answer to that question either. We have far more questions than we have answers, there's no question about that. So I honestly don't know. I don't know why the rush.

We have already said, and many boards across this province have said, that we don't object to the change, and we would like to be a part of that. We would like to be consulted. We'd like to work with the government. So far we have not been given the opportunity. If perhaps there was a little more time to get through this transition process, it would be done correctly.

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Mr Wildman: Would it make sense to have the funding formula first?

Mrs Murtha: Absolutely.

Mr Tascona: I'd like to thank you for your presentation. I've got a couple of questions and perhaps you can just respond to them. We had a previous presentation from CUPE citing two examples of outsourcing and then that they were brought back. Was there any study conducted before it was outsourced or was the study conducted after the outsourcing occurred?

Mrs Murtha: When our board received by divestment from CFB Borden five years ago the students from CFB Borden, it came with contracts of outsourced custodial cleaner service. We simply finished out that contract, which gave us some experience with it. We certainly did a study before the end of that contract, and simply from a financial point of view decided that perhaps we might renew that. Also with a new school that we built in the

Wasaga Beach area, we decided to go with a custodian-cleaner combination.

Having watched those two very, very carefully over the next year or so, we did another study and decided that, quite frankly, it just didn't work. It simply did not. To have cleaners come in just was not the same as having our own employees do it, both in quality and for many other reasons as well. It certainly did not work, and we studied it from two different perspectives.

Mr Tascona: Any studies you'd want to share with the committee?

The Vice-Chair: Mr Tascona, your time is up. I apologize.

Mr Tascona: I was just asking —

The Vice-Chair: Your time is up, Mr Tascona. There were two minutes allowed to each caucus.

Mr Tascona: On a point of order, Mr Chairman: I'm just asking if there are copies of the study they would wish to share with this committee, because it's an important issue.

The Vice-Chair: You may want to ask them. I'll remind you that it was the government that insisted on the time limitations on delegations, and your time is up.

Mr Tascona: I was asking for a point of order to ask that.

The Vice-Chair: It's been asked. If you would like to provide those to the committee, we'd be happy to receive them.

Mrs Murtha: We have always provided Mr Tascona with any information he wished to have. It's certainly public information.

The Vice-Chair: Mrs McLeod, you had a question for the ministry?

Mrs McLeod: Yes, a request for information. It follows on the apparent confirmation that there is serious consideration being given to transferring a number of the responsibilities for school maintenance, construction, secretarial staff and busing to the municipal level. I would like to have the knowledge of exactly what figures are being used in considering that transfer of funds. It's directly relevant to the whole question of the maintenance of funding for education. I would assume the Ministry of Education has already provided that material, board by board, to the municipal table that's considering this shift in funding and I would ask that it be tabled for our committee.

The Vice-Chair: That question will be duly noted and hopefully responded to.

Mr Skarica: If it's available, I'll table it.

Mrs McLeod: If it's not available, there is a major problem in considering shifting the cost to the municipalities.

Mr O'Toole: Mr Chair, on a point of order with respect to the Chair clarifying Mr Tascona's request that all members of this committee should get a copy of the studies, I'll tell you very frankly, I have a private member's resolution dealing with the issue of outsourcing, so it's important for me, where the experience is documented, to have access to that.

The Vice-Chair: Certainly. I understand that and perhaps next time you could ask the ministry, in order to extend the time. The problem I have is we have limited

time. We still have a number of delegations to hear and everybody's been very understanding and cooperative staying within those time limits. Perhaps next time, in that sort of environment, you could pose the question to the ministry the way the opposition has been, to provide that information.

Mr Tascona: You cut me off too soon.

The Vice-Chair: No, I didn't.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Chairman, could I make it clear in my question that I want five-year capital forecasts of each board.

Mr Wildman: Mr Chairman, just to be helpful, all the members could just accept what CUPE has told them and then they would know —

The Vice-Chair: Mr Wildman, please. Now you're being provocative unnecessarily.

Laughter.

The Vice-Chair: To the audience, I've asked today a number of times, no demonstrations.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL
TEACHERS' FEDERATION,
SIMCOE DISTRICT
SIMCOE COUNTY
WOMEN TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, Simcoe district, Douglas Bailey, president; and Linda Sugars, president, Simcoe County Women Teachers' Association. Welcome.

Mr Douglas Bailey: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for affording us the opportunity to provide you with the grass-roots input that is so essential to the democratic process. We speak on behalf of public school teachers in Simcoe county.

Bill 104 is the first major school board overhaul since the amalgamation of school boards in 1969, when the present structure was created. That's about three decades ago. Despite what the government will try to have us believe, our system has served the taxpayer well. Without debating statistics, the product speaks for itself. We have produced and continue to produce outstanding graduates who have gone through our system and graduated to become citizens who make worthwhile contributions in Ontario, across the nation and around the world. Other countries that have seen our product are so impressed that they send their promising students as visa students in order to benefit from our OAC and university programs. Despite Mr Snobelen's beliefs, the system is not broken and gives good value to the taxpayers for the money expended. Nevertheless, Bill 104 is here and you are seeking advice.

Teachers are planners. Good teaching requires good planning. If you are fully convinced that change is necessary, make sure you know where you are going before you proceed. If we've waited this long to change, let's get it right. As we see it now, the left hand does not seem to know what the right hand is doing. The changes being suggested are massive, yet any planning done so far does not seem to reflect any evidence that any impact studies have been conducted before proceeding. Every morning my radio goes off at 6 o'clock and I, along with

backbenchers, members of the opposition, the cabinet and the citizens of Ontario, listen to Metro Morning as we hear what new and undeveloped idea Mr Snobelen has launched on the Ontario school system.

Just the other day I received this pamphlet informing me of yet another new curriculum which will replace the Common Curriculum, which is not yet fully implemented in Simcoe county. He mentions a new report card. Will this replace the new report card that is just being field tested in Simcoe county this year? Let's hope so, because each set takes 80 hours to complete.

We've streamlined, destreamed, specialized, employed phonics and used the developmental language approach. No wonder teachers get confused. Let's take our time. It seems to us that a well-planned initiative, thought out over time, will ultimately be cheaper and more successful than one rushed into place to satisfy some political initiative implemented as a smokescreen to hide the cost-cutting that is part of this bill. This educational reform is going too far too fast. Don't repeat the Bill 103 fiasco that you're going to be involved in tomorrow and today. Sound governance requires sound planning.

Trustees, as elected officials, are directly accountable to their electorate. Reduction of their numbers in already large geographic areas such as ours and creation of new large areas represented by a relatively small number of trustees will make it exceedingly difficult to ensure adequate representation.

There is a false assumption that parent councils are able and wish to take on the role of trustees in individual schools. A recent Toronto Star article indicates that the majority of parent council members neither want to run the school nor want to make decisions about which they know nothing. Parents want to be heard; they don't want to make the decision, but rather to influence the decision.

Leaving trustees with no ability to tax residential property will generate a greater reduction of existing services, for many boards such as ours have been paring and fine-tuning their operation over the last few years and they will experience even more erosion. While our board has tried to be fiscally responsible, we now have a huge deficit and we have eliminated vital programs, staff and support services as a result of the reduced grants. In fact, the mill rate in our county has been suppressed in comparison to other boards and the proposed provincial recommendations. As a growing board, our needs are more specific and demanding. We do more with less, yet it appears we will receive even less with our new structure, and statistics indicate that we will continue to grow. **1930**

Ms Linda Sugars: The transfer of financing is a potentially dangerous concept. First, we believe municipalities will be blindsided once they get their first welfare bill. They will be clamouring to reassume the task of collecting education taxes on the property tax bill as they are doing at present.

Second, if you are convinced that the province should assume the financing, then fold down school boards entirely and be on with it by shifting to a provincial board of education. With no ability to raise local taxes, boards of education will become absolutely powerless.

The concept of an elected trustee is still an important one in democratic Ontario. Being citizens of Ontario, we have become accustomed to democracy and access to the courts when we believe a law has been broken or the rights of our citizens violated. The establishment of the Education Improvement Commission and its attendant committees is frightening. The powers afforded the committees to make decisions without appeal flies in the face of our democratic traditions. Why do they need such unfettered, draconian powers? If a decision is made, it must be able to withstand a challenge in the courts or else we will have turned over decision-making to an unelected and unchallengeable body in charge of the hearts and minds of our youth. The last time a country did that in this century, the results were devastating. That price is too high to pay, all in the name of some doubtful efficiencies we may attain.

Further analysis of Bill 104, with its emphasis on the EIC and its mandate, indicates that this small group of five to seven will have to contract the services of more experienced personnel if they are to make decisions on an ongoing basis, especially within tight time lines. It appears that the cost savings from reducing boards and trustees will be used to finance the salaries and contracts of appointed members who in turn may acquire their status as a gesture of tokenism. How can you justify this new system of governance when the members are appointed? How will the needs of diverse and unique regions be considered if all of the appointed members could come from urban centres? How quickly will they be able to make decisions if they must travel long distances to meet? It seems inevitable that these individuals will be earning large salaries and that they will have expenses incurred to get the job done. Where are the savings you are proposing?

This plan appears to be a sample of the proverbial shell game where things are moved around to confuse the general public with a shift in the decision-making base. In all likelihood there will be no ultimate dollar savings at all, and certainly no accountability, since the decisions of this group are deemed final and will not be subject to appeal or review. This impinges upon a fair and democratic process and this is certainly not what the taxpayers are expecting. For seven members to oversee the distribution of assets and liabilities of the existing boards and the transfer of staff seems incomprehensible, especially when they will have little working knowledge of the individual boards. The EIC will be a powerful decision-making group, and the membership base should be based on an electoral process rather than one of appointments. Certainly the elected trustees should have some say in recommending candidates for these positions.

If there is to be excellence in education, it will take a specific amount of money to educate a young child and to nurture them to be a lifelong learner. If you fail to do this, it will take much more financial support to help the older student who is experiencing difficulty. The proposals presented in Bill 104 strike a similar chord. Instead of nurturing and replenishing the work of school boards, you will be continuously striving to hold a barebones system together. This proposal is a gross injustice to the democratic process which will leave taxpayers with a

limited voice in their children's education. The government should be focusing and directing its energy on a vision of the future of education which will provide strong support for classroom programs to ensure success for students as lifelong learners.

As teachers, we are also concerned about collective bargaining and seniority procedures. Bill 100 has served us well. Its record of success since inception is enviable.

Excellence in education, which you describe in your 1997 document, will only become a reality if you build upon a strong base of collegial consultation. We implore you to pursue this route and to acknowledge the strength that already exists in our education system with parents, teachers, administrators and trustees. The resources are there and we are partners in education. Let's work together.

The Vice-Chair: We have approximately four minutes in total left; that's a minute and a third for each caucus.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much for your presentation. As this bill is entitled, it says it's going to improve accountability and quality. Do you see anything in this legislation that will improve the accountability of the system or the quality of education for students in Ontario?

Mr Bailey: That's hard to tell because we don't know where we're going or what we're doing yet. In terms of helping parents to become more involved in the process, I don't believe that at all. On one hand we've got school councils, but I think the faith in school councils is misplaced. In the first few years, in the rush to get involved in it, sure, it's great, it's exciting, it's new. But as most school board trustees know, running school systems is really a lot of drudgery and hard work.

Mr Froese: In your report on page 1 you indicate that "our system has served the taxpayer well." On page 3 you say, "There's a false assumption that parent councils are able and wish to take on the role of trustees" and that "the majority of parent council members neither want to run the school nor want to make decisions about which they know nothing."

We had a presentation earlier today from Mr Chambers and Mr Beatty. I'll just quote some of the stuff, and this is what I'm hearing from by far the majority of parents and teachers of your association in my riding: "School boards of today have distanced themselves from parents and teachers; they are restrictive; they discourage risk-taking" — and I'll condense it here for the sake of time — "They are concerned mainly with who should have access to knowledge and influence on decisions." They talk about a simple thing like getting an extra chalk board when they have all the stuff readily available there and they take two weeks to process paperwork and get approval to do such things. They say that we, this committee, "will be told that there are insufficient parents willing to give the time and accept the responsibility of an empowered parents council. Nonsense. There are lots." Who's right here?

The Vice-Chair: I'm afraid there won't be time to answer that. Perhaps — Ms McLeod, you have a minute and a third.

Mrs McLeod: I thought you were going to say perhaps I would answer Mr Froese's question.

We've heard from the representatives of literally hundreds of parent councils over the course of these committee hearings, and if there's one good thing to take from what's been happening, it's the way in which parents have said how much they value their relationship with their local school trustees. We've heard that over and over again.

The companion piece to this is educational funding. The minister entitles it "meeting the needs of students." Do you see anything in what's happening right now that will better meet the needs of the students in your classrooms in Simcoe county?

Mr Bailey: Under the shell game that's going on right now, no, I can't. Mind you, I know even in talking with government MPPs, the path of the Ministry of Education certainly isn't clear right now. I wasn't being facetious when I say we turn on the radio to find out what's coming next. I was talking to one of the Conservatives the other day and he said, "I have no idea where we're going."

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much. We're out of time.

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PAUL FLEMING

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is Paul Fleming. Mr Fleming, welcome.

Dr Paul Fleming: Thanks very much for giving me this opportunity. I want to direct most of my remarks towards the Education Improvement Commission. If you've got my submission in front of you, you'll see on the front that I've listed some of my credentials. I'm a school psychologist, and have been for 23 years. Before that time I was a teacher. Currently I'm also a municipal councillor in Springwater township. You are in Springwater township now. I'm also director at the Royal Victoria Hospital. Those experiences also impinge on some of my comments.

I've entitled this Fiscal versus Cultural Restructuring. I'm a little surprised that we haven't had more of an academic flavour to the presentations. The Education Improvement Commission is supposed to be restructuring education in the province. There is quite an academic literature on which to base some judgements.

If you look on the yellow sheet — I wish you wouldn't take too much time right now, but eventually — this is probably the best summary of what the academic literature says about restructuring. Your research officer will probably supply you with more; at least I would hope so.

I had some thoughts about making this kind of a group projective, but by this time of the night I'm sure you're ready for something a little different, so I've given you some graphics rather than the usual print material. I almost wish you'd look at this thing for a second and find out, what is this guy really trying to say?

The front picture is really my interpretation of what Bill 104 is saying, as well as some of the pronouncements that the minister has said. Clearly the target is cost savings. The restructuring arrow has a lot to do with centralized curriculum, centralized assessment, reduction in

bureaucracy and so on. That thinking has a lot of merit in the short term. If you flip over to the back side, you'll see an interpretation of what the academic literature says about restructuring, which is I believe more of a long-term issue. In the centre of the target we have students. I think that's much different than the fiscal issues, and it's really regrettable that the bill doesn't talk about students. It talks more about economics than anything else.

What we really want are students for the 21st century, students who will work in a competitive climate, people who are creative, lifelong learners, who participate in society, and quite a few of the other things that most of the members are familiar with. The way you get there is through this arrow. I've listed eight of the major themes in the academic literature: quality of learning experiences, integrated curricula, collaborative leadership and management — these are givens. This is what the research is telling us will work in the long term. Again, there are a lot of short-term answers that have been suggested, but long-term, this is what we need to be looking at.

Of my own select four themes, the first one is CQI. A lot of you I'm sure would be familiar with continuous quality improvement. This is a management technique that hospitals are using to accomplish much better financial responsibility, much more accountability. I believe it's the way of the 1990s and the year 2000 and beyond. I think the prescriptive, autocratic, controlled ways of dealing with spending are ways of the 1950s. I would really like to see schools get more into CQI-type things, and I would hope the commission would look at in-service initiatives and getting people to work more as a collaborative team, establishing their own standards as much as possible.

The next section is taxation and local governance. I guess as a municipal councillor I am pleased to see the removal of education taxes from our responsibility. I'd really like to see, though, a 10% local levy continued. I took my master's degree in England and I saw what an education system looks like when you go to a totally site-based management. You do need some degree of local central control to provide leadership. I found that the teaching varied tremendously from school to school. I saw some of the worst teaching in the world; I saw some of the best teaching in the world. But you need to have trustees, I'm afraid. I think we need trustees paid to the tune of about \$10,000 to administer a 10% levy and provide direction and a local identity.

Another issue is teacher morale. Last year I carried out a study in our own system looking at how you improve self-esteem in kids. Clearly, if teachers have high self-esteem, principals have high self-esteem and they're counted, and it's not an autocratic process, it's more of a CQI or true restructuring process, they will have high morale because they're part of the process. I think that's how you get to that target of competitive workers of the 21st century.

The last section is the contribution of parents. Again, I believe strongly in the need for school councils and parent contributions. I wouldn't be a very good psychologist if I didn't. But what I've seen so far in school councils are the beginnings of getting things to work. Right now I think schools are having some real problems

trying to figure how to work with parents who have not worked in school systems before, who don't know a lot of the procedures. Likewise, the parents often come in with their own agendas. God bless them, I think they're trying very hard, but there's a lot of learning. So please don't assume that site-based management is going to be an easy process for school councils. We're going to need at least three or four years and a lot of work by EIC.

I hope I've given myself some time for questions. I'd really like to engage your thinking on this one because there is a quantum leap from what I think the bill is all about.

The Vice-Chair: We have four minutes left for questions, approximately a minute and a third per caucus.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much, Paul. Actually, I find your presentation very exciting as we've listened to some 80 over the last — perhaps 100 now, this week. There's some commonality to that, but I compliment you on the creative nature of your presentation or challenge to us.

I just want to pick up, not in confrontation but as a sort of dialogue, intellectually kind of looking at things — I respect that. I am a futurist myself in my own baggage. I think to the challenge of all educators and parents and indeed the entire community. Today when I look at the recent publication of David Foot's book *Boom, Bust and Echo*, and Nuala Beck's book on the end of work, looking at 21st century technology and change, I put to you that there would be no greater need for change, or at least evidence to examine change, before each one of us and all of the participants should be involved.

We may disagree with process, but don't you agree that there should be a significant swing here, as most of the work won't be factory work? You know that; I know that.

Dr Fleming: Absolutely.

Mr O'Toole: The world of work is profoundly, forever changed, not because of any government.

Dr Fleming: Mr O'Toole, I agree with you entirely. I think we are really at a great need for change. Again, I see the EIC as fostering that, but I just hope they look at some of the literature and again more of the collaborative stuff rather than the things that seem to be coming from an autocratic standpoint.

Mr O'Toole: I have two more little points, if I may.

The Vice-Chair: Very quickly, Mr O'Toole.

Mr O'Toole: The CQI approach I completely agree with. As you re-examine the organization and the organization's ability to measure itself, the expected goals, there have to be some measurable outcomes.

Dr Fleming: You've got it.

Mr O'Toole: If there aren't, it's a futile process. It's hypothetical.

The third thing is, the most responsible participant, whatever their academic background, has to be the parent. They are with them —

The Vice-Chair: Mr O'Toole, we're out of time. You have to pass it on to the opposition.

Interjection.

The Vice-Chair: You may want to have a chat afterwards. Very fascinating discussion. Mrs McLeod.

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Mrs McLeod: Certainly the parent councils that have come before us have all agreed with you that it's too soon to ask them to take on more responsibility; they're in a very definite learning curve. They've also said that even if they are ready at some point to take on more responsibility, they still want to keep boards of trustees. They feel that's important.

I agree with you, and I appreciate your bringing the British perspective, that if you don't keep some taxation base at a local level, the chances of holding on to boards are not great.

Let me put those points of agreement to one side for a moment, because the problem is that the minister is planning to control 100% of the funding of education. Noting that you're a school psychologist, that puts you in the group of people who are outside the classroom and part of the \$6 billion in supposedly expendable expenditures of school boards. So I guess my question, and it's a very serious one because I don't believe there is a real appreciation of the support role that is absolutely critical if kids are to learn: Are you going to survive? If you don't, what does that mean to kids?

The Vice-Chair: Very briefly, please.

Dr Fleming: I wish I had an hour.

The Vice-Chair: You don't.

Dr Fleming: I really see us as part of the infrastructure. I wish I could take you through my day-to-day work where teachers are under enormous stress. I see myself as almost part of the CQI process in fostering people's thinking and helping them overcome a lot of hurdles that would really sludge up the system a little bit. I really wish I had a lot longer for that one, but thank you.

Mr Wildman: I found your presentation interesting and stimulating. One has to look at it in the context of a commitment to take another \$1 billion out of the system, starting in 1998, from the provincial government.

I found your comments about the United Kingdom of particular interest. Site-based administration of schools appears to me to be a step towards charter schools, which in my view are simply private schools at public expense, a two-tiered system. Could you comment on that, considering your experience in Great Britain?

Dr Fleming: It really scares me. I think charter schools and so on are really overrated. I'm repeating myself to some degree, but you cannot understand how important local leadership is in the curriculum area, the consultative area and so on. Local schools can develop, but what they wind up doing is becoming very patchy in terms of they become very strong in certain areas.

Mr Wildman: The upper-middle-class ones largely.

Dr Fleming: Yes. And you get a moderating, I guess, thrust from the so-called central control, say in Simcoe county. Boy, there's a lot more I'd love to comment on in that one.

The Vice-Chair: I apologize, but the time just will not allow it. Thank you very much for your thoughtful presentation. I am sure other members may want to question you outside the chamber afterwards.

YORK REGION BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the York Region Board of Education, Dr Glaze and Bill Crothers. Good evening.

Mr Bill Crothers: Good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to address you tonight.

The Vice-Chair: You have 15 minutes. You can use it all if you choose or save some for those long, rambling, minute-and-a-third questions by the three caucuses.

Mr Crothers: We'll try to save some time. First of all, my name is Bill Crothers and I am the chair of the York Region Board of Education. York Region is immediately north of Metropolitan Toronto. It's roughly 640 square miles, which is about 1,600 square kilometres. The current population is about 600,000, which is slightly more than double what it was 15 years ago, and in the next 20 years it is expected to grow to about 1.1 million. We currently serve about 80,000 students, which is expected to grow to about 140,000 in that same 20-year period.

With me is Dr Avis Glaze, who is the associate director of the York Region Board of Education. Avis has been a supervisory officer for about 12 years. She has served in four school boards, three of them as a supervisory officer. She's familiar to several of you, if not all of you, as one of the five commissioners on the Royal Commission on Learning. She has also just returned from being part of a ministry delegation which spent two weeks advising and providing support to the government of South Africa.

You have copies of our brief. I don't propose to read that to you, but there are a couple of areas we are going to highlight.

In our view, Bill 104 lays the framework for many profound changes to education in this province, but the most consequential changes are those which have yet to be introduced, specifically the new funding formula for education and changes to Bill 100. The minister has indicated that his new funding formula will be based upon the needs of students. If that is in fact the case, our board applauds that decision. The minister has also suggested there will be changes to the way teacher contracts in the province will be negotiated. Again, if that is the case, our board applauds the minister. But it's in that context that we want to make our comments on Bill 104.

We generally support both the intent and the content of Bill 104 but we have some suggestions that we would make to you. My comments specifically will deal with the issue of outsourcing, and I'll come at it from two perspectives. The first one is that we applaud the minister for advocating more outsourcing or consortium arrangements with neighbouring or coterminous boards and with municipalities. In our brief, specifically on pages 4, 5 and 6, we identify many areas where we have done just that, and we would recommend that the EIC examine the kinds of partnerships that are already developing in many areas of the province and provide incentives for boards to follow these examples.

We disagree with the notion of outsourcing school secretarial services, and if the ministry is contemplating advocating the outsourcing of custodial services in

schools, we would recommend that as a first step the ministry, through pilot projects, develop unit costs for these services, build those unit costs into the funding formula, and then allow boards, in this as in other areas, to determine their own priorities.

The second area that concerns us is the directions being considered with respect to the downloading of costs to municipalities to compensate for the removal of education funding from the residential property tax. We did not agree with the decision to remove education from the property tax for two fundamental reasons. One was the difficulty of offsetting in an equitable manner the provincial expenditures equivalent to the amount of the education levy. That has been demonstrated by the difficulties that have arisen when the decision was announced, including the reaction to the downloading of welfare costs to municipalities.

The second reason was that in our view it was not necessary for the government to remove education from the property tax in order to control completely the amount of money spent by school boards. We accept that the government has a right to determine how much money school boards spend, and as I've mentioned already, we applaud the government if they produce an equitable funding formula which is truly based upon the needs of children because that, unfortunately, is not the case with the funding formula we have today.

The issue that concerns us most is the suggestion that the government is contemplating making municipalities responsible for school transportation and school properties. In our view, it's a myth that municipalities are better custodians of municipal dollars than are school boards. In York region, by example, expenditures by our nine municipalities over the past 17 years have increased at a greater rate than the expenditures in the York Region Board of Education.

The municipalities have been able to keep their mill rate increases below those of the school board because their grants have not been subject to the standardized mill rate factor which school boards have, and secondly, because they've been able to raise their revenues significantly by levying higher user fees. Our school board operates several times as many buildings as do the municipalities, with far higher daily use. Our current contracted transportation costs per rider and per vehicle, and our employees per vehicle, are far lower than any of the transportation services that are supplied within York region. We also serve the rural areas, yet our level of service is superior to that of the municipality.

If the government is determined to remove school board operating expenditures from the residential property tax, and if the government is considering downloading the costs of providing school transportation, new pupil places and the maintenance of school properties and buildings, we would recommend three things: (1) that school boards be given the responsibility for providing those services; (2) that school boards be permitted to levy property taxes to raise those funds; (3) that school boards, and in particular growing school boards, lead the discussions determining the criteria that would be required for implementing (1) and (2).

Avis has some comments that she would like to make as well.

Dr Avis Glaze: I would like to comment on three areas, and I'll do that very briefly: the issue of partnerships and cooperatives with neighbouring boards; the issue of the powers of the Education Improvement Commission and school councils; and the role of trustees. Let me say, though, that as a board we welcome reform. Although we have had excellent reviews from parents, in some instances a 93% satisfaction with our system, we still think there's room for improvement within the spirit of continuous improvement, so we welcome educational reform.

We ask, however, that there be a clearly articulated vision for education. Within York region that vision, for us, includes new accountabilities for staff, for parents and for the communities in which schools are imbedded.

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On the issue of partnerships and cooperative services, I am delighted to say that the York Region Board of Education is indeed a leader in this area. From as early as the 1980s, when these partnerships were not even contemplated by many, the York Region Board of Education has had a very strong relationship with the separate school board. They have shared services in a number of areas, and we have listed so many of those on pages 4 and 5 of our brief.

We also have partnerships with municipalities, with colleges and universities. In our board we have been focusing a lot on leadership development and we have universities, Nipissing, University of Toronto, OISE, and so on, all offering post-graduate courses within our school board. We value those partnerships and indeed we would want to ensure that school boards are encouraged to continue those partnerships.

In terms of the powers of the Education Improvement Commission, their powers are immense, they will have a dramatic impact on school systems, and we believe they should not be immune to the scrutiny of the courts. Therefore, we recommend that there be no impediments to seeking the scrutiny of the courts in relation to decisions made by the EIC.

In the area of school councils, we value school councils and we believe in parental participation in education, but we hasten to say that many of the parents from whom we have heard, and indeed from my experience going across the province, want involvement that has a direct impact on their children's achievement. They do not want to govern schools.

In that regard, we are recommending that the commission consider fully some of the experiences in other jurisdictions, such as Britain, New Zealand, Chicago, to name a few, when you contemplate the duties and powers that are best suited to school councils, in order to ensure maximum effectiveness. We know what's happening in some of those countries; let us bear that in mind. Let us give school councils time to work through their current mandate before augmenting their current responsibilities. Indeed, we would be advised to do some studies before we make some of the mistakes that have been made in other jurisdictions.

The role of the trustees: This is probably not a very popular topic, but I felt very strongly about this and wanted to say something about it. We believe the roles should be streamlined and in our board we will manage very well the reduction in the numbers from 19 to 11 or 12, but we do not support the remuneration that has been proposed for trustees. You may remember that both the Sweeney report and the report of the Royal Commission on Learning recommended figures of \$15,000 and \$20,000, respectively. I personally think that is very fair.

We're sending a message here that education is not important. Would we attract directors on boards of major corporations by offering similar stipends? We do know there will be restrictions as well in terms of the individuals who will seek these positions. Whereas our trustees are not in it for the money — in fact, for many years they have been very responsible and they have not awarded themselves any raises — we believe that if we value education and the work involved, the work of the trustees, this area of the remuneration should be reconsidered.

In summary, as a board we will live with many of the changes, but as we have recommended in our brief, there are some which need rethinking. In fact, we believe our board can be used as a model for areas such as interboard cooperation because we have had such a long history of cooperative services, of outsourcing and of working very closely with a coterminous separate school board.

We ask you and encourage you to build upon the goodwill that exists across the province and ensure that none of the cherished principles and values which we have will be abrogated as we chart a new course for education. Thank you.

Mrs McLeod: I'm curious. As a board not directly affected by amalgamation, so you don't have the transitional issues of amalgamation, and you're obviously a board that's proud of its fiscal accountability, why would you think the EIC needs to have anything to do with you in terms of controlling your operations for the next year?

Mr Crothers: There are probably a couple of responses to that. It may be not accurate to say we're not going to be affected by the changes. Geographically, we're not affected in that we're not merged, but Bill 104 provides a framework for some very significant changes to education in the province. We will be less impacted than many other boards in that respect. We're saying we don't have any particular difficulty subjecting ourselves to the scrutiny of the EIC, particularly if you put the restrictions on them that they're still subject to the courts, to the normal legal review or appeal procedures.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much. Whenever I meet you two individuals I'm impressed by your comprehensive and reasonable, knowledgeable approach.

I'll ask two very quick questions. First, your presentation seems to be premised on an "if": if the government provides a funding formula that meets the needs of students. Considering that there have been statements made by the minister that he expects to take another \$1 billion out of education, that certainly is a big if. What kind of consultation have you had around the funding formula, and if the government is taking over complete

control of expenditures and funding as well as curriculum, what is the role of the trustee?

Mr Crothers: There are two parts to that. Number one is that somebody's going to make that determination, and it's a big if. We've lived with the first round of reductions. We can manage and we can handle those, though they create difficulties.

What is the role of the trustee? People are making the assumption that because trustees won't have the right to levy taxes or set the mill rate, they'll lose their responsibility. The only thing they will lose is that final determination about whether to raise more money beyond what is contemplated through the normal funding mechanism or zero-based budgeting. Decisions will still have to be made on the priorities. That will not change. The only change will be the degree. In our particular case — our budget is \$512 million — we'll lose the determination over that last \$5 million or \$6 million. But it just gets moved down the ladder. You still have to establish the priorities and you still have to make those decisions. That doesn't change.

Mr Skarica: I really enjoyed your presentation. I've met with officials of your board a number of times and I find you to be a most innovative board, and when you do criticize the government you do it in a positive and constructive fashion, and I personally appreciate that.

I want to talk to you about the outsourcing, your recommendation 1. We've heard that in parts of Ontario it's already being done. In Ottawa the francophone boards have had substantial savings and used that to better the education of their students. On the other hand, in northern Ontario I see other situations where it's not going to work at all, where you have perhaps one caretaker in an isolate board and he's part of the community. The private sector is just not an alternative. How would you see that working, your recommendation 1?

Mr Crothers: We don't have difficulty with the outsourcing provided that it's not mandated exactly how you do it. Our emphasis has been more on cooperative ventures. We already outsource our new school construction, our transportation services, a lot of our service contracts. For these things we're already doing outsourcing. In addition to that we're doing cooperative ventures, not only with our coterminous board but with our area municipalities as well. That's the kind of thing we think the government should encourage, and it should be the local decision as to the most effective way, whether it's outsourcing or cooperative ventures.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much. I wish we had more time to discuss these things with you.

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ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION, DISTRICT 27, SIMCOE

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Simcoe, Donna Kenwell, provincial councillor, and Keith Speers, district president. Welcome.

Mr Keith Speers: I'd like to begin by thanking OSSTF District 10 Peel for offering us their time slot to present this evening. Our executive would like to know

the criteria used to select presenters to such a committee hearing and we look forward to a response to our question.

Donna and I represent approximately 1,100-plus secondary school teachers employed by the Simcoe County Board of Education, which encompasses 14 high schools and five adult learning centres.

Let me start on a positive note. From a geographic perspective, we are pleased that the proposed legislation does not reduce or enlarge the area administered by our board. We have one of the largest boards in the province right now, except of course for northern Ontario. This does not, however, mean that our education system will not be significantly affected.

Although many Ontarians may seem to agree with Bill 104, assuming that amalgamating school boards, reducing the number of trustees and capping trustee honoraria will be beneficial to taxpayers, such approval may be short-lived as theory becomes reality. Even if only the financial ramifications of this bill are considered, there is no guarantee that less money will be needed from taxation for education, although it may be assessed by both provincial and municipal governments.

As teachers as well as taxpayers, OSSTF members are more concerned about how the Fewer School Boards Act will affect our classrooms and our students. This, we admit, is difficult to predict. Bill 104 is full of smoke and mirrors. Despite careful study and analysis of this legislation by OSSTF, more questions are raised than answered. As citizens with special responsibilities regarding the next generation, we are appalled by the anti-democratic nature of decisions made by Ontario's Conservative majority government, which exemplify irresponsible and unaccountable governance. Such misuse of power is a poor lesson indeed for our students and one which is difficult to explain and impossible to justify.

OSSTF Simcoe will address four major objections to the Fewer School Boards Act.

(1) I think you've heard this complaint before: the Education Improvement Commission. The Education Improvement Commission will have unprecedented powers despite the fact that its members are not elected and are apparently answerable to no one. Section 344 provides that the decisions of the EIC "are final and shall not be reviewed or questioned by a court." We fail to understand how any government body can have carte blanche authority to act outside the law, most particularly in a venue and with a mandate which will affect the entire population of this province.

What is the government telling the people of Ontario? Is it saying that democracy, fair play and equity no longer exist in Ontario? Why hasn't the present government proposed legislation which would provide for a clear and rational transition in the amalgamation of school boards? This was done in 1968. Why can it not be done in 1997?

We fear that despite public hearings such as this, decisions dictating fundamental and sweeping changes to public education have already been made, based primarily on cost-cutting rather than on quality or equal availability of service. Our scepticism has grown as we have watched the Health Services Restructuring Commission at work.

(2) School governance: The proposed transfer of responsibility for educational funding from school districts to the provincial government effectively silences the voices of those most directly involved with our schools. The right and the responsibility of locally elected representatives to set tax rates which respond to local needs has been removed, which is not to suggest that OSSTF has always agreed with our trustees' decisions in this regard. The Minister of Education and Training has promised that the province will distribute funding equitably and with due regard for special needs, but no formula has yet appeared. How is it possible to plan or to administer an educational program when future budget figures are a mystery and when spending will be overseen by the spectre of the EIC?

Governance of schools will also undergo a radical transformation under this legislation. Some authority will shift from trustees and senior administrators, if any remain, to school councils, which may make decisions regarding curriculum, discipline and even hiring of principals. OSSTF strongly objects to the devaluation of professional expertise clearly implied here.

We are also concerned by the possibility of biased or exclusionary school councils, which might readily assume power to pursue their own agendas. The current parent councils, particularly in the secondary panel, have relatively few members, and the majority of those members have been acclaimed and surely do not represent the full range of students. A version of this system was tried in Chicago a number of years ago and, with few exceptions, was notably unsuccessful.

To ad lib for a minute, I think you could compare parent councils to minor hockey, which I was familiar with a few years ago. You are involved until your child is finished with it and then you're out of there. I fail to see that there will be any continuity with parent councils whatsoever.

This concept adds another layer of bureaucracy to education, as did the government-imposed establishment of the College of Teachers, which was neither wanted nor needed, yet this government claims to be streamlining education.

Ms Donna Kenwell: (3) Staffing: OSSTF believes that every educational worker, like every student, is important. Non-instructional services provided by custodians and secretarial staff are essential to the day-to-day operation of the school, the wellbeing of students and teachers and the maintenance of a safe and healthy learning environment. Cuts in these areas are already all too apparent. Outsourcing or privatizing these jobs to save money is likely to result in poor service as well as being unfair to dedicated, long-term employees.

Mr Snobelen's promise that cuts will not affect the classroom might seem to have merit, but only until his classroom is defined. It includes only teachers, educational assistants and supplies. Glaringly absent are principals, vice-principals, guidance counsellors, teacher-librarians, speech, hearing and language specialists, special needs teachers, and heat, light and transportation. Nor is adequate attention given to capital expenses. Simcoe county is a growing board that serves an ever-increasing student population. Where will school addi-

tions or new schools come from, and who will pay for them? We strongly object to the suggestion that any of our members who are not classroom teachers can be replaced by unqualified employees.

(4) **Collective bargaining:** OSSTF is a large, effective union representing 50,000 dedicated professionals. In protecting the interests of our members, we also work to improve public education. During the past 78 years, teachers have become more qualified and better educated, with continuing professional development advocated for and provided by OSSTF. We have negotiated legally for smaller class sizes, special education for students with special needs, preparation time and the fair employment practices and compensation necessary to attract excellent candidates to the profession. We believe that despite some trials and tribulations, collective bargaining works to the benefit of the educational system. I believe that studies have shown that 97% of the collective bargaining that has occurred since the introduction of Bill 100 has been solved without the trials and tribulations of a sanction.

Ontario and Canada have been praised internationally for their fair and equitable labour practices and for the respect and dignity accorded to workers in all fields. Collective bargaining, which maintains these values in the workplace, is threatened by the current government. In this area too Bill 104 hints at, but does not definitely state, major changes to current practice. Will OSSTF continue to negotiate with what remains of our local board or will provincial bargaining be imposed? Will the EIC's overriding control of budgets make the entire process an exercise in futility? Will teacher unions even be recognized as bargaining agents in the future?

The uncertainty of our members' individual and collective future in Ontario adds to the high levels of stress already felt as the result of crowded classrooms and schools, shortages of supplies and provincial educational policy which replaces one program with another before curricula for the first is even in place. This is no way to run a school system.

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Mr Speers: In conclusion, we wish to emphasize that our members are not convinced that the sweeping changes proposed by Bill 104 will make the reality of education in Ontario more accountable, more efficient or better. The major thrust of this proposed legislation is cost savings. We can find little of proven pedagogical value in Bill 104. If the minister is serious about improving the quality of education in this province, why does he not consult relevant research before rushing to change what is already a fine system? Why is he unwilling to listen to professional educators who possess the expertise, experience and commitment required for this task?

Vital questions are not answered in this proposed legislation. We ask that the government withdraw Bill 104 and direct its efforts towards developing well-thought-out, carefully researched and adequately funded policies with the genuine and legitimate goal of improving public education in Ontario. Thank you.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much. We understand that the government is moving forward with changes to

Bill 104. Also, we've been told that the new funding formula will be available in April, after the government intends this bill to be passed.

Having said that, is there anything in this legislation, Bill 104, that you can identify that would, in your opinion as professional teachers, improve the education of the students in your classes?

Mr Speers: Off the cuff, I can see no pedagogical value to Bill 104 whatsoever. Our members are convinced that the reason for Bill 104 emerging is purely cost-saving. It's simply part of the money grab to extract another \$1 billion out of the education sector to give people an income tax rebate, particularly the rich.

Mr Skarica: You referred to the Chicago experience. If I could refer you to an experience I've been reading about recently, it's Marva Collins's school in Chicago. Are you familiar with it?

Mr Speers: No, I'm not.

Mr Skarica: She was a teacher and she became disgruntled with the Chicago system. She set up her own school and took inner-city kids that the public system didn't or couldn't teach and had tremendous success with them, and hired non-unionized teachers and that type of thing. I guess I know the answer I'm going to get, but how would the OSSTF react to a school like that being set up in the inner city?

Mr Speers: We would be totally opposed to it. Did you get your right answer, Toni?

Mrs McLeod: I'm a little tempted to bend on the question I was going to ask and ask you to expand on the why, because I think it might be relevant.

You note that only teachers, educational assistants and supplies are protected under the minister's definition of classroom which is not to be cut, which is one of the reasons I was a little surprised to see that in the ministry's own estimates of the cost savings from amalgamation, they take some \$9.9 million directly out of classroom supplies and another \$1.3 million directly out of educational assistance. So it appears we are left exclusively with teachers in terms of the definition of a classroom that can't be cut. With the collective bargaining at hand and the concern about harmonization of costs, one wonders whether there is anything related to classroom education which is not going to be subject to cuts.

You've also asked the question, where will new schools be built, and by whom? As of today it appears highly likely that this will be a question for municipalities to address. If the plan is to shift to municipalities the cost of school construction and responsibility for maintenance, secretarial staff and busing, what does that do to your school?

Ms Kenwell: The concern I have is, as well as being a "lap-dog educator" — I believe I was called that earlier today — is this is my 23rd year as a teacher-librarian and I find it repugnant that this legislation does not regard me as a teacher and essential to the classroom. The only other consolation I could offer anybody here is that I'm also a Liberal Party hack and will be working very diligently to make sure that this is a one-term-wonder government.

The Vice-Chair: I apologize, your time is up.

ASSOCIATION DES ENSEIGNANTES ET DES ENSEIGNANTS FRANCO-ONTARIENS

The Vice-Chair: The next group is the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, René Lachapelle. Bienvenue, Monsieur Lachapelle. Ce matin j'ai expliqué qu'aujourd'hui nous n'avons pas notre service de traduction parce que le comté de Simcoe n'est pas une région franco-ontarienne sous la Loi 8. Si vous préférez, vous pouvez donner votre présentation en français, mais la plupart des députés ici ne peuvent pas parler français, alors il va être très difficile pour eux de comprendre votre présentation. Mais nous pouvons avoir une traduction pour les députés dans l'avenir.

I just explained that we do not have our translation services here today because this area is not a designated area for French-language services. If you prefer to speak French, obviously you can, but the majority of our members do not speak French and may not understand what you have to say. However, we will make translation available to them next week if you choose to speak French. This is consistent with hearing policies in the past.

Mr Wildman: Just for the record, I would like to register my objection to the process. It seems to me that anyone should be able, as you've indicated, to make a presentation in either of the official languages, and process should be available to ensure that all members can understand.

M. René Lachapelle : Je peux parler français très lentement. La plupart d'entre vous avez un livre. On peut suivre ensemble. Ça peut être une leçon de français, cours 101. J'enseigne le français aux adultes aussi.

M^{me} McLeod : Plus lentement.

M. Lachapelle : Mais, vous parlez très bien, Madame McLeod. Allons-y à la page un.

Le Regroupement Simcoe catholique de l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, ce qu'on appelle AEFO, remercie les membres du comité permanent de la Législature sur le développement social qui étudie le projet de loi 104 de lui donner l'occasion de présenter quelques réflexions pendant ses consultations sur le projet de l'amalgamation et la création des conseils scolaires.

Ce regroupement de l'AEFO représente les 92 enseignantes et enseignants oeuvrant dans les écoles catholiques élémentaires et secondaires du comté de Simcoe. Il y a beaucoup plus d'enseignants francophones que ça dans le comté de Simcoe. Il y en a avec le conseil public. Alors, moi je représente les enseignants catholiques — jeune, peut-être, mais merci quand même.

L'approche de l'AEFO, ce n'est pas de mettre des barreaux dans les rues, mais vous remarquez que, venant d'une communauté francophone, on voit comment ça peut être très bien reçu pour les élèves des écoles françaises et pour la communauté francophone.

(1) Création des conseils scolaires de langue française. Premier paragraphe : Vous avez remarqué, comme c'est indiqué, que les francophones appuient le projet de loi 104. C'est comme on dit, «Enfin, finalement, félicitations»; c'est comme, «Merci beaucoup.» Mais il y a quand même des changements qu'on doit faire — qu'on doit faire ? Qu'on peut suggérer.

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Deuxième paragraphe : L'association et la communauté réclament la gestion scolaire depuis plus de 25 ans, et enfin on dit, «C'est arrivé.»

Troisième paragraphe : L'AEFO entend donc participer pleinement à la mise en oeuvre des conseils scolaires de langue française en collaboration avec le ministère et les organismes en éducation. Alors, j'espère que vous retenez le mot «partenariat.»

(2) Page 2 : Protection des enseignantes et des enseignants :

Il n'y a aucune garantie pour les enseignants, et c'est ce qu'on souhaite recevoir : qu'est-ce qu'il va y avoir comme garantie contractuelle ?

On espère qu'aucun enseignant ne perdra son poste ; Je saute : que toutes les enseignantes et tous les enseignants aient droit à la pleine reconnaissance de leur ancienneté ;

Reconnaissance des congés de maladie accumulés et crédits de service accumulés pour fin de gratification ;

Et je saute au sixième point : Qu'on ne subisse aucune perte de salaire ;

Que les conventions collectives actuelles soient en vigueur jusqu'à la signature de la première convention ;

Le dernier point sur cette phrase : que les enseignantes et les enseignants soient protégés contre toute mutation obligatoire à l'extérieur de leur conseil d'origine jusqu'à la signature de la première convention.

À la page 3, financement des conseils scolaires : On souhaite que le gouvernement puisse pomper ou ajouter ou inclure un financement adéquat, parce qu'on ne peut pas voir comment on pourrait survivre ou même partir ou commencer sans avoir une certaine somme d'argent. C'est bien beau et je respecte, jusqu'à un certain point, les coupures du gouvernement conservateur, mais si on veut mettre un projet sur pieds, il fait de l'argent, certain. Ce n'est pas de nos poches, c'est de l'argent pour que le système fonctionne.

Deuxième paragraphe : L'AEFO demande que le projet de loi 104 soit modifié pour inclure des nouvelles modalités de financement de l'éducation qui assureront aux conseils de langue française un financement équitable et juste.

Fonds de transition, et c'est là où on parle de l'argent, des fonds de démarrage :

On ne peut pas se fier aux ressources des conseils scolaires actuels.

Le projet de loi 104 doit donc exiger que le ministre mette des fonds de démarrage à la disposition des nouveaux conseils scolaires.

Je vous laisserai lire le restant du document. Je peux passer tout de suite à la conclusion à la page 6.

L'AEFO appuie le projet de loi 104 dans la mesure où il accorde enfin à la communauté francophone la gestion de ses écoles. Elle sera heureuse de collaborer à la mise en oeuvre des nouveaux conseils scolaires de langue française.

Par contre, l'AEFO est inquiète que le projet de loi ne prévoit rien au plan de la protection des droits contractuels du personnel enseignant.

Enfin, l'association considère que le projet de loi pourrait être amélioré sensiblement en reconnaissant

davantage les différences importantes qui existent entre la situation des anglophones et celle des francophones dans le contexte de la réorganisation des conseils scolaires.

Le regroupement de l'AEFO et moi-même, René Lachapelle, vous remercions, membres dévoués de ce comité permanent de la Législature sur le développement social, de lui avoir donné la possibilité de soumettre son point de vue.

Le Vice-Président : Merci beaucoup. On a neuf minutes en total, trois minutes par parti. Thank you very much. We have nine minutes left, three minutes per party.

M. O'Toole : Excusez-moi, Monsieur, je ne parle pas français. I will ask you a question as I could understand what you were saying very well. Thank you.

On page 3, under financing of the school councils, you talk about the system being equitable and just. That's paragraph 2, last sentence. It's a new system being created. Would you think that each student is entitled to the same funding?

M. Lachapelle : On voit ici une différence, nécessairement, entre les octrois et les fonds que peuvent recevoir un conseil public et un conseil catholique. L'AEFO représente les deux, mais on voit où il y a quand même des injustices et là où on habite ici en Ontario avec les impôts fonciers, les impôts commerciaux et les impôts résidentiels, et qu'il y a justement une certaine équité à ces niveaux-là.

Mr O'Toole : I'm not certain I completely understand. The funding: même chose pour les systèmes ? The same dollars for each system?

M. Lachapelle : Il est sûr selon les nombres et les besoins, mais je ne vois pas où on devrait avoir de grandes injustices. «Grandes injustices ? Non, merci.» Vous comprenez ?

Mr O'Toole : You're not interested in big injustice.

M. Lachapelle : Je vais parler comme un enseignant. Pour que les enseignants puissent permettre aux enfants — peu importe où dans la province ce l'Ontario — d'avoir une éducation de qualité.

M^{me} McLeod : Vous avez dit que vous déplorez le fait que le projet de loi ne prévoit aucune garantie contractuelle pour le personnel enseignant, et c'est vrai. Je sais qu'une telle garantie est partie intégrante de la Loi 30. Mais je ne comprends pas exactement pourquoi c'est un problème pour les enseignants et les enseignantes franco-ontariens en ce cas.

M. Lachapelle : Ça peut être vu comme très général au point de vue de l'ensemble des enseignants de l'AEFO. Tout simplement, c'est une approche de grande famille ; on inclut tout le monde. Ce n'est pas seulement une approche pro-francophone, c'est aussi pro-enseignant, pro-système d'éducation.

M^{me} McLeod : Je dois poser cette question en anglais, si vous permettez, parce que c'est une question complexe.

M. Lachapelle : Ça va. Allez-y, Madame McLeod.

Mrs McLeod : Help me to understand. This is a situation which — French school boards are expanding; there should be new job opportunities. What exact guarantees are needed? Is it a guarantee of not being moved from one region to another?

M. Lachapelle : C'est un point de vue — on appelle ça «mutation» — de changer d'un endroit à un autre.

Avec certaines coupures on peut agrandir les salles de classes ; c'est là qu'on pourrait perdre des enseignants. On l'appelle «licenciement», ou «billet rose». Vous comprenez ?

M^{me} McLeod : Oui.

M. Lachapelle : Ce n'est pas ce qu'on souhaite. J'essaie d'élaborer plus à votre question. C'est que les francophones n'ont pas beaucoup de conseils scolaires. On en a quelques-uns. On a des sections de langue française, comme ici à Simcoe, comme à plusieurs places en Ontario. Il y a quelques conseils scolaires, mais de nombreuses sections de langue française, tandis que du côté anglophone ce n'est pas vraiment une création de conseils scolaires, c'est une amalgamation : on les met ensemble. Ils sont déjà organisés. Ils existent. Nous comme conseils scolaires francophones — il n'y en a pas beaucoup — mais des sections de langue française, c'est ce qu'on va mettre ensemble, c'est ce qu'on appelle «création», ce qui n'a pas de grande structure. Ils ne sont pas nombreux : Toronto, Ottawa, vous comprenez ?

Mrs McLeod : Perhaps the commission will solve it all.

M. Lachapelle : J'espère.

M. Wildman : Merci beaucoup. À la page 3, une phrase : «L'AEFO a toujours maintenu que la création des conseils scolaires de langue française allait de pair avec un financement adéquat.» Following from Mr O'Toole's question, if I could pose a question in English, what is «un financement adéquat»?

Surely we know from studies that francophone students have not achieved as well as anglophone students, on average, across Ontario, and particularly in comparison with Quebec. If we were to go with what I think Mr O'Toole was suggesting, similar funding for all students, surely in your view, and certainly in mine, that would not be «un financement adéquat.»

M. Lachapelle : Je n'ai pas compris le dernier bout de la phrase.

2040

Mr Wildman : If we had similar funding for all students in Ontario, with some flexibility, I understand — we don't have the funding formula yet, so I'm speculating, but Mr O'Toole was talking about similar funding for students across Ontario. If francophone students are funded at the same level as anglophone students, surely that is not adequate funding to deal with the special needs of the francophone community.

M. Lachapelle : C'est un fait réel que, étant minoritaire, la même somme d'argent, ce n'est pas pareil, et je comprends maintenant la question de M. O'Toole.

C'est vrai, parce qu'on le voit dans les systèmes où ça coûte beaucoup plus cher pour un service d'éducation pour les francophones. On se demande pourquoi, mais c'est minoritaire : moins de ressources, c'est plus difficile d'aller chercher les renseignements qui nous coûtent plus cher. C'est un fait avec lequel je vis, moi, personnelle-ment.

Mr Wildman : If one is to compare Ontario with Quebec and the funding that is provided for anglophone students in Quebec, considering that they are indeed in a minority situation in Quebec —

M. Lachapelle : Je comprends très bien votre point. Je ne veux pas faire une guerre politique ici. Je ne viens pas du Québec. Je viens de Sudbury. Et vous comprenez que oui, ça coûte plus cher, aller chercher des services, même sans aller au Québec acheter nos livres ou aller acheter des services. Puis même encore, vous comparez les anglophones du Québec avec les francophones d'ici.

Interjection : Oui, je pense qu'ils sont mieux desservis, eux.

Le Vice-Président : Nous avons utilisé tous le temps maintenant. Merci beaucoup. We've used all our time. Thank you very much.

ST MONICA'S SCHOOL

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the Simcoe County Catholic Principals' Association, St Monica's School, Mary Lynne Barker, principal. Ms Barker, welcome.

Ms Mary Lynne Barker: Thank you very much. I'm absolutely amazed and would like to congratulate you on your commitment and endurance. I sat through some of the afternoon and I am very impressed by how much time you've taken with the hearings.

Just as a complete counterpoint to the previous presentation, I would like to do take a page out of Agatha Christie, and rather than Miss Marple and St Mary Mead, I'd like to present a thumbnail sketch of St Monica's School for you to extrapolate our parent council experiences to the rest of the principals in Simcoe county. We share many common experiences, and as you know, I'm here also as chair of the Simcoe County Catholic Principals' Association.

St Monica's School has 700 students. We have a large catchment area, all of downtown Barrie as well as the rural area to the north. As such we have a huge demographic, socioeconomic difference from the very poor, marginalized people in our society to the prosperous, well-educated professionals in our community.

St Monica's has also had a long history of parent involvement, long before I came, with annual elections, the president chairing the public meetings, posted agendas, those kinds of traditions, so PPM 122 was not greeted with great enthusiasm. In fact, it was viewed rather as a GTA imposition, something that wasn't particularly appropriate to our needs. But we engaged in the process, and of the 455 families in the school, eight people came forward and were acclaimed, an experience of over 90% of the schools in this area. I'm sure you've heard that before.

St Monica's School council is absolutely the dream council. There's no Mrs Windbag or Mr Nosy Parker or the one-horse wonder. These are honourable, well-intentioned, dedicated people working for the good of the whole school community. They are honestly overwhelmed by the scope of what they are expected to do and have clearly stated that they do not want to take on more. They already feel they're floundering, and of course you've heard that kind of information time and time again. I would really like to present to you very strongly that it is unrealistic to impose increased government expectations. I would ask you to please go slow or at least make it

optional, not make it the law, like 122 was, so that the community can respond to where it feels it is.

Our educational system has been based on a series of checks and balances between individualism and collectivism. Time and time again you've heard how much local people value their trustees and their access to that level of accountability, that they have local access and they feel input. I don't think devolving it to a council that does not feel ready to undertake that kind of jurisdiction is a reasonable expectation. What Bill 104 proposes seriously erodes the checks and balances between local jurisdiction and provincial power. Obviously, if Bill 104 goes through as proposed, the power will swing significantly into the provincial quarter. The concern my colleagues and I share is that we will not be able to impact on that in any significant way that reflects our needs. I would ask you also that you please reconsider that.

The last round of cuts had terrible impacts at St Monica's. Fortunately, we were one of the few boards in the province that lived up to our commitments to early childhood education, but every school, every staff has paid for that. We have fewer custodians, so that means the portables are cleaned one night, the school's cleaned the other night and the teachers sweep their own classrooms. It means that every classroom has more children. For a school of 700 students — fully integrated inclusion: Down syndrome, blind, deaf, wheelchairs — there's one EA for the whole school. That's it. It's a cut, but that's what we're left with. All the noonhour programs are gone — rainbows, house leagues, that kind of thing — because the noonhour supervisors were cut to pay for the cost of keeping junior kindergarten.

What I'm saying to you is please listen to what it means in the school to the people who are taking the direct impact of the kind of cuts that have already happened. Our fear is that with the swing to power in the provincial quarter, there is the distinct potential for more money being extracted out of education. The vested powers proposed for the EIC would make that entirely possible.

It is certainly laudable for a government to want the very best possible education for its citizens and its future. Our education is certainly our cornerstone. It's the cornerstone of our society. It has built the society we have and it's our hope for the future, but I would beg you not to turn back the clock with the draconian measures proposed in Bill 104 regarding the trustees and the EIC. Thank you.

2050

The Acting Chair (Mr Bruce Smith): Thank you very much for your presentation. We have about two and a half minutes per caucus for questions, starting with the official opposition.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much. There are some, probably many, within the separate school system who would welcome the minister's statements that we are on the eve of equitable funding for students across the province. I'm very conscious of the impact of cuts you've just described. You did it in a very graphic way. Is it your concern that equitable funding may prove to be equitable funding at a level so low that it's actually going to mean even more disastrous cuts in your classrooms?

Ms Barker: It's pretty hard to be lower than the second-lowest-spending county in the province. You've heard some of what it really looks like in the classroom. Classrooms of 33 and 34 are the norm. Every classroom has gone up four or five over the past year or two. I sincerely hope that's not the case, but it is entirely conceivable.

Mrs McLeod: You've spoken about the school councils and the fact that they are overwhelmed already with what they have been asked to do and would not want to take on additional responsibilities. Many of us are concerned that by default we may lose our school boards and that school councils will have to take on that role. I don't know if you want to answer this question, but I'm concerned about whether within the separate school system there's a sense that — obviously, there's constitutional protection of the right to governance, but is there a concern that school councils might be seen as sufficient to meet that constitutional right to governance? Would you think that's a possible interpretation?

Ms Barker: I think that is a very serious concern. There were references earlier to constitutional guarantees because of the fear of eroding the constitutional rights, and also very recent precedents in other provinces that have caused some serious concerns here that we might be next.

Mr Wildman: That's a very important issue. I want to deal, though, with what you had to say about what's happened at St Monica's. As you know, the Conservative Party was elected on a commitment to guarantee classroom expenditures. Obviously, despite what Mr Snobelen has said, there have been very serious effects on the kids in your classes at St Monica's. Do you think it's a fair statement that has been made in other contexts by Mr Snobelen that it was a choice made by your board and/or by the teachers in their collective agreements, that they chose, in your case, to preserve junior kindergarten and therefore that adversely affected the other classes? How would you respond to that kind of interpretation?

Ms Barker: I guess there's some truth in that. One could use that information in that way. Teachers want to see that their colleagues are not cut out of jobs and are willing to make sacrifices, and in fact did make sacrifices to that effect.

But also there is a matter of doing what is morally right and correct, and we know that the absolutely best way to provide a level playing field for a young child from a very disadvantaged situation is early intervention, and junior kindergarten is the ticket. We have little kids in our school who come from very deprived environments who really should be coming to school every day. They need the stimulation and structure that a literacy-based program offers them that they don't receive otherwise in their lives. They don't have trips to the pumpkin patch or maple syrup or the zoo. That's not part of their lives at home.

Mr Wildman: Would that the government hadn't made junior kindergarten optional.

Ms Barker: Indeed. And there's the daily traffic snarl and danger because of the busing cuts, the traffic outside of the school. I do daily yard duty. I'm a traffic cop outside the school so children aren't hit.

Mr Skarica: I want to talk to you about another alternative that, quite frankly, is one that probably is going to cause concern among the teaching community. Right now in Ottawa they are experimenting with a junior kindergarten program with early childhood educators as opposed to full-fledged teachers, and the preliminary results are that the level of education is about the same. I find somewhat disturbing — I'll just read it to you. Alia Kent, president of the Women Teachers' Association of Ottawa, has indicated that if the Ottawa board can't provide a junior kindergarten program with unionized teachers, it shouldn't provide any program at all. It appears that by using early childhood educators, the cost of the program is cut in half. I'd like your comment on whether using early childhood educators would help you, and if the Ottawa program finds that the level of education is about the same, on whether you think that would benefit those kids.

Ms Barker: This has been an ongoing and contentious issue. First of all, in an early childhood program generally the ratio of adult to student is about one to six or eight, whereas in the kindergarten classes at St Monica's it's one to 24. Immediately there is a staffing issue in terms of the cost tripling if you are going to provide the ECE ratios in terms of staffing.

The other thing is that there is a really significant difference in the whole basis and philosophy of the program. If you speak to any parent who has a child in day care on one day versus in a kindergarten program on the other day, they engage in significantly different programs. A program in a classroom is a literacy-based program that is specifically geared to lay down the foundations for future reading and writing, and an early childhood education program is not focused and designed on that basis whatsoever. They have two very different functions.

If you want an ECE program, there are ECE programs available, but if you ask parents what their preference is, they want their children in a literacy-based program, in a junior kindergarten program.

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation before this committee.

Ms Barker: Thank you for the opportunity. You are in the ninth-inning stretch.

The Acting Chair: I call on Mr Terry Kelly of the Unemployed Workers' Council. Is Mr Kelly present?

There are some motions the committee has to deal with. I'm waiting for the return of the Chair so the motions can be properly dealt with, so I hope I can have the committee's patience for a moment.

Interjections.

The Acting Chair: Is there a consensus? Do you want to defer dealing with these motions or is it your preference to deal with them this evening?

2100

Mr O'Toole: I don't think we'll be giving them fair treatment at this late hour.

Mr Wildman: We're going to have the same problem on Monday. We'll have presentations all day Monday.

The Vice-Chair: What is the committee's pleasure? Do you want to deal with them now?

Mr Skarica: I can deal with it now. Do you want to deal with it now, Mr Wildman? It won't take long.

The Vice-Chair: Do we have unanimous agreement to deal with it now?

Mrs McLeod: Is there a chance that the government might support it if we defer it?

Mr Skarica: No. I'm proposing a motion myself.

Mr Wildman: Perhaps we can deal with mine first.

Mr Skarica: We'll deal with yours first. We've got some more information on the Hornepayne situation. Apparently they've eliminated their shop programs and have also eliminated all their technology courses, so there's a real possibility that they may benefit from being in that larger board. What I'm going to do is propose another motion. I'll just read it to you:

That the standing committee on social development urge the minister to advise the Education Improvement Commission to review the submissions this committee has received regarding proposed district school board boundaries in northern Ontario, particularly regarding the challenges of distance and technology infrastructure.

The Vice-Chair: We must first deal with Mr Wildman's motion. You can either withdraw it, Mr Wildman, or we can have a vote on the motion itself.

Mr Wildman: I don't intend to withdraw it. I understand the parliamentary assistant's position. I don't want to prolong this; it's a late hour. I just want to point out that in saying he anticipates that the Hornepayne board may benefit from being included in a larger entity, essentially he's saying that perhaps those students will have to go somewhere else anyway at some point, to another centre to study, that they'll have to be boarded out or whatever.

I've had discussions with ministry staff regarding the Hornepayne secondary school education situation and their proposal has been distance education, that is, satellite technology or boarding the kids out in another area. Frankly, a number of students go outside of Hornepayne now for the courses they can't get in Hornepayne and the board pays tuition to other boards for that. The ones who are attending now are attending because they want to get an education in their own communities and they want to be in their own homes.

I understand the position that the ministry and the parliamentary assistant are taking, but I stand by the motion and I would like my motion to stand. I don't think we need to prolong the debate. We had the presentation from Ms Beatty representing the board and the community yesterday and I think everyone understands it. I appreciate the fact that all members have taken an interest in this very unusual and unique situation.

Mrs McLeod: Well, I am now prepared to extend the debate. I am more than a little astounded at the response that was just given to the motion. We have spent two days going across northern Ontario hearing concerns of boards about the nature of the amalgamation that's about to be imposed on them. We had a board that came to us and said very clearly why this amalgamation was wrong for it in a way that was persuasive for members of the committee as recently as yesterday.

To the parliamentary assistant, I assume this is the response of the Ministry of Education, that because they have cut their technical education it might be good for Hornepayne to be in an amalgamated board.

The reason I'm distressed is, first of all, because that's in direct opposition to what the Hornepayne board told us and, second, because I find it incredible if that is the Ministry of Education's explanation of why Hornepayne is included in a larger amalgamated board. If that is the insubstantial and almost ludicrous reason that underlies any other amalgamations, I would really want to demand some further answers from the Ministry of Education about what the reasoning is underlying every one of these amalgamations.

Mr Skarica: I'm not saying that Hornepayne cannot be on its own, as has been indicated. We're saying that we would like the Education Improvement Commission to look into it. If that's the best thing for the students, to be on its own, the ministry's position is that that's what should happen; if it's not in the best interests of the students, it shouldn't. All I'm saying is that the Education Improvement Commission should look into it and have all the information before it.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Chair, I understand that is Mr Skarica's motion, but I also understood Mr Skarica to offer a reason why it might be good for Hornepayne to be in the amalgamated board, and the amalgamation of boards is the substance of this committee's deliberations. I would like to know whether that is the ministry's response to Hornepayne.

Mr Skarica: No, I just used that as an example of one of the considerations the Education Improvement Commission could look at. I don't know all the details. I couldn't and I don't think anybody could, unless you went there and looked at it in some detail, and we haven't done that.

Mrs McLeod: I sort of thought we had heard.

Mr Wildman: I understand the positions taken by my colleagues. I would just reiterate that I would prefer this committee to take a position with regard to the very cogent submission made by the Hornepayne Board of Education that they should not be included in a larger board, that they should be treated in the same way as the coterminous, isolate Hornepayne Roman Catholic Separate School Board, which is going to be designated, I understand, as a school authority. I would stand by that. I understand the government's position, as articulated by Mr Skarica, that perhaps the commission should look at this. I would like our committee to take a position. The commission is going to have to look at this anyway.

The Vice-Chair: Any further discussion? I remind you we're voting on Mr Wildman's motion, which was deferred from yesterday.

Mr O'Toole: Could you read the motion again, please?

Mr Wildman: I move that the standing committee on social development express the view that the Ministry of Education and Training should designate the Hornepayne Board of Education as a school authority, as the ministry has stated it intends to designate the coterminous isolate Hornepayne Roman Catholic Separate School Board, and that the Hornepayne Board of Education should not be amalgamated with the other boards to form the proposed district school board number 1.

The Vice-Chair: All those in favour of the motion? Those opposed? The motion is lost.

Did you wish to place a motion, Mr Skarica?

Mr Skarica: Yes, in light of the evidence that we heard over the last few days, I'm moving a motion as follows:

That the standing committee on social development urge the minister to advise the Education Improvement Commission to review the submissions this committee has received regarding proposed district school board boundaries in northern Ontario, particularly regarding the challenges of distance and technology infrastructure.

2110

The Vice-Chair: Is there any discussion on the motion that's been put by Mr Skarica?

Mr O'Toole: With all respect to Mr Wildman's motion which was just defeated, I believe this allows a lot more consideration and thoroughness instead of a one-off for Hornepayne. We did very clearly hear a lot about distance, sizing, resources, highways, a lot of different things in northern Ontario. This sends a signal, I think we can agree, that it needs to be treated very specially. I'd like to be on record as recognizing not just Hornepayne, but that some of the suggestions we heard were of value.

Mrs McLeod: I want to add for the record, for the Education Improvement Commission, that the Hornepayne board is the only one that made representation to the committee asking to be designated as a school authority. There is only one other situation in Ontario in which the separate school is designated a school authority while there is a public board, and that's in Atikokan.

The Atikokan board presented to us, and it indicated that it could be comfortable with an amalgamation if there was a change — you'll remember it was the Highway 11-Highway 17 issue — if it was only with the Highway 11 boards. Therefore, it is not a comparable situation.

The Hornepayne one truly is unique. If it's a matter of cost, the Ministry of Education pays the full cost of school authority schools, but Hornepayne is going to pay 100% of the cost under their scenario in any event. If it's a matter of getting students access to technical education, it's too far for the Hornepayne students to travel to any of the boards they're to be amalgamated with to get the technical education there.

Mr Wildman: I won't prolong the discussion on the previous motion other than to say that the Education Improvement Commission is going to have to look at the Hornepayne situation as well as a number of other situations. If this commission is to be established, I would say it's going to have to have the ability, under the guidelines provided by the minister, to suggest an increase in the total number of boards in the province. If that's the import of this motion, I applaud it, because up to now the minister has said there could be changes in the boundaries but that there could not be an increase in the total number of boards over 66. If that's the proposal here, I would applaud it, and I would hope it would accommodate the desires of the people of Hornepayne to

have their particular situation dealt with somewhat differently.

The Vice-Chair: Any further discussion? There being no further discussion, I'll call the question. Those in favour of the motion?

Interjection: Recorded vote.

The Vice-Chair: It's unanimous. You don't even need a recorded vote. It's a unanimous vote.

We also have a motion deferred from yesterday from Mrs McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: It's in a state of permanent deferral unless there is some further advice from the House leaders. Mr Wildman indicated that he was contacting the House leaders.

Mr Wildman: I was informed today that there has been informal discussion among staff members of our three offices. The Liberal and New Democrat position is that they would be willing to accommodate an unofficial meeting of the committee, if the committee wished to do that, and it would not be seen as a violation of the time allocation motion. Our understanding from Louise in Mr Johnson's office was that she or someone from Mr Johnson's office was going to be contacting the Conservative members on the committee to confirm their view of this. That's all I know. She was going to talk to you fellows to get some further input before she got back to my office.

The Vice-Chair: Just one other note. I've been advised by the clerk that in the event that it's an unofficial meeting, there would be no Hansard, no broadcasting and no clerk or researcher available to the committee if it chose to meet. Given the information you've provided, Mr Wildman, I'm looking at the Conservative members of the committee, and I don't believe you've been contacted by your House leader's office yet. I'll consider the motion deferred until Monday.

That being said, is there any further business?

Mrs McLeod: Mr Chair, I appreciate the fact that there may be no way we can carry out the clause-by-clause amendment process with an informal agreement. My sole concern, and I would just ask the Conservative members to note it, is that I don't think the House leaders had any idea that we would be arriving back in Toronto at about 11 o'clock at night and that the amendments would be due at 9 o'clock the next morning. We will meet those time lines, but it certainly doesn't provide an opportunity to do justice to what we heard during the last day or two days.

The Vice-Chair: Duly noted.

I'd like to thank the people of Simcoe county and Barrie for their hospitality, even though members of my political stripe have not always found a lot of welcome in this part of the province. That being said, we'll adjourn this committee meeting till Monday at 12 o'clock in Windsor.

The committee adjourned at 2116.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville L)

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| Mr Jack | Carroll (Chatham-Kent PC) |
| Ms Annamarie | Castrilli (Downsview L) |
| Mr Dwight | Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville L) |
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| Mr Bruce | Smith (Middlesex PC) |
| Mr Bud | Wildman (Algoma ND) |

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| Mr Bill | Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne PC) |
| Ms Frances | Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine ND) |
| Mr Allan K. | McLean (Simcoe East / -Est PC) |
| Mr John | O'Toole (Durham East / -Est PC) |
| Mr Toni | Skarica (Wentworth North / -Nord PC) |
| Mr Joseph N. | Tascona (Simcoe Centre / -Centre PC) |

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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Monday 24 March 1997

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 24 mars 1997

**Standing committee on
social development**

**Comité permanent des
affaires sociales**

**Fewer School
Boards Act, 1997**

**Loi de 1997 réduisant
le nombre de conseils scolaires**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Monday 24 March 1997

Lundi 24 mars 1997

The committee met at 1156 in the Windsor Hilton Hotel, Windsor.

FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 RÉDUISANT
LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Consideration of Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système, en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

The Chair (Ms Annamarie Castrilli): Welcome to the hearings of the standing committee on social development. This is our ninth day of hearings and the first one here in Windsor.

Members of the committee, we have two documents that have been circulated. One is a list of questions that have been posed to the committee to date and have not yet been answered by the Minister of Education, and the other is the summary of hearings to date. You might want to review those at your convenience.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): Madam Chair, I have a motion. Is this an appropriate time?

The Chair: This is an appropriate time.

Mr Duncan: I have provided written copies for the committee as well as the ministry. I move that:

Whereas a number of organizations have expressed the view that parts of Bill 104 are unconstitutional;

Whereas a number of these organizations have indicated that they intend to challenge the constitutional validity of Bill 104;

Also recognizing that the government of Ontario has in the past referred education legislation to the Ontario Court of Appeal for a constitutional opinion, Bill 30;

Be it therefore resolved that the standing committee on social development recommends that the government of Ontario submit Bill 104 to the Ontario Court of Appeal for a ruling with respect to the various constitutional

issues that have been raised in the course of these public hearings.

We present this because we have now heard from a number of presenters that they are challenging parts of Bill 104 in the courts, and it was pointed out at a forum I hosted last night that there is a precedent in Ontario for the government to submit a piece of education legislation to the courts for a constitutional opinion. Accordingly, we think it would be in order at this time to do the same, because a number of groups are contemplating this kind of action and perhaps once the bill is passed it will be an opportune time for the government to save everybody a lot of hassle and submit it to the courts.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I would strongly like to endorse the motion and also present to the government for their consideration the fact that this could be a way of saving considerable cost. There's no question that the constitutional challenge is going to go forward. It will be a costly process, not only for those who are taking forward the challenge but also for the government to respond. It would be much more expeditious and much more cost-effective if the government were to follow a precedent which has been set under Bill 30 and seek a Court of Appeal ruling on whether this bill and its accompanying proposals are indeed constitutional.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): The government is opposed to the motion. Basically, there has been legislation in the past that organizations had indicated they would oppose but the government has gone ahead in any event. There's lots of precedent for that, and virtually on every occasion the court challenges do not succeed. So the government is opposed to this motion.

Mrs McLeod: I would suggest to Mr Skarica that the most recent example of a court challenge was one in which the government lost. I think it is inappropriate for a government to continually bring private citizens and representatives of public organizations into a situation where they have to expend a great deal of money to challenge what may not be constitutionally valid legislation.

It seems to me it's appropriate for the government, if it's confident that its legislation is indeed constitutional and would sustain a court challenge, to seek that voluntarily, rather than subject these groups to even further costs.

Mr Duncan: Just one other point: The government has continually argued that we should proceed as quickly as possible. In fact, you have restricted the amount of public hearings, the time over which the hearings can be held, and have insisted on an agenda that moves very quickly to implement your reforms. It would seem to me that it would be in the government's interest to pursue this. If indeed the government is interested in reform and doing

it as quickly as possible, this will save time and allow the courts to make a decision with respect to the constitutionality of the bill.

The Chair: Any further debate? We'll put the motion to a vote. All in favour? Opposed? The motion is defeated.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, I'm appreciative of the fact that the outline of questions which we raised during the course of last week's hearings has been tabled. It is now Monday. Clause-by-clause is to begin Wednesday. I'm wondering if we can anticipate some response to the questions before that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs McLeod. I was quite prepared to put a time limit on this issue, but Mr Skarica actually has something to say.

Mr Skarica: I spoke with ministry officials this morning and we will be tabling a number of answers today and the rest of them tomorrow morning.

The Chair: Could I suggest that they be here by tomorrow noon so that the committee has time to analyse the responses and internalize them for clause-by-clause the next day?

Mr Skarica: Okay.

ST GREGORY SEPARATE SCHOOL STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Chair: May I call the St Gregory Separate School student advisory council to the table: Ms Pat Machina. We're very happy to have you here and are looking forward to your comments. You have 15 minutes within which to make your presentation. If time permits, the committee will ask you some questions.

Ms Pat Machina: Members of the Legislative committee on social development, as chairperson of the SAC of St Gregory's school, a taxpayer, and the mother of two children in the English separate school system, I would like to thank you for allowing us this opportunity to express our opinions and ideas regarding Bill 104.

We feel the amalgamation of existing school boards will reduce the complexity of managing education and it will save tax dollars. The dollars saved can be put into front-line education services. We were delighted at your announcement January 13, 1997, regarding your "commitment to move students to the head of the class: refocusing resources where they belong — on the individual student and teacher in the classroom."

We support the creation of the Education Improvement Commission and the proposal to appoint Mr Cooke as co-chair. We respect Mr Cooke as a person who cares about parents and students and as one who is knowledgeable about the problems facing our local school systems. We also believe he has the courage to make the tough recommendations that will improve our school systems.

We believe that parents and SACs shall have a greater role to play in managing the delivery of educational services to our kids. With the simplification of management systems, today's parents will be able to play a supervisory role in managing the schools that their children attend, for example, choices on curriculum, dealing with problem teachers and, yes, dealing with problem parents, peer counselling with parents, resolution

of problems that arise between teachers and students. School councils should not replace school boards, but we would like a voice with the passing of Bill 104.

Bill 104 promises to distribute equitable funding to ensure the high quality of education, meeting all students' individual needs. This would include children at both ends of the learning ability continuum: children with special needs and the gifted. We would like to recommend you show us by:

Lowering the PTR; 38 and 39 students in a grade 7 class is not acceptable.

Increasing the support staff for the special needs and the gifted. They need to exist in a symbiotic environment, with programs and resources in place for both these areas of need.

Providing continuity of care within the school that outsourcing will not provide. Our children need to see the same faces daily. They need to feel secure and safe. They need to feel part of the school family.

Filling the classrooms with adequate textbooks and resources for updated curriculums.

Providing an adequate number of classrooms so that there are no more portable cities.

Maintaining the English-language separate school boards.

All of these issues are important to the parents of our children. The education of our children should be the number one priority of the Education Improvement Commission. The fear that is being perpetuated by Bill 104 needs to be addressed so that the creation of the EIC has a positive effect on parents, teachers, support staff, trustees, and in particular, the children. We recommend that the parents have a voice and a place on the local EIC. Who has a better feel for the pulse of the school than the parents of the children who attend these schools?

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much. I think if we all had an assurance that there were going to be significant savings and that those savings were going to be returned to the benefit of students in the classroom, many of us would have fewer concerns about the legislation that's before us, so I think we share that perspective. If there were really dollars and if they would benefit children from the classroom, we would all be in agreement.

I guess there are a couple of concerns I'd like to raise with you. First of all, the Ministry of Education's projections of what they think they could save only give us about \$150 million on a \$14-billion budget, and even some of those savings come directly out of the classroom. So it's difficult to be optimistic that there are actually going to be dollars returned to the classroom.

There is also the fact that the ministry's consultants have indicated that amalgamation could lead to increased costs rather than to savings. You may be aware that when Mr Wells, for the previous government, did a study of school board amalgamations in Windsor and Essex, he came to exactly that conclusion. He said, "From everything that I've studied and heard, I concluded in fact that the amalgamation of boards is more likely to increase costs than to reduce them." His concern was that they would rise to the level of the highest spender.

Given the fact that all the studies — Windsor-Essex was repeated in other areas — concluded that there would

not be savings, because of the whole cost of harmonizing services and salaries and that you would not want to see services at the lowest level, you'd want to see them at a higher level, where do you see the dollars being saved that might go back into the classroom?

Ms Machina: In the board, for example — especially I have had to deal with the Essex county separate school board — I think there's a bit of redundancy in payments made out to some of the board members there, and I think perhaps there won't be a duplication of any disbursements from the boards if the boards are amalgamated into one.

Mrs McLeod: It was Mr Wells's suggestion that those kinds of savings could be achieved and should be achieved, but they could be better done at a local level between the coterminous boards; in other words, the public and separate boards making agreements to find the most cost-efficient way of providing the services, rather than amalgamating, with the potential for considerably greater costs through amalgamation.

The other concern we have — and I'll look to the Chair in terms of time, whether there is time for a second question — is that the statements by both the Minister of Education and the Premier are that they're really looking for \$1 billion to take out of education, not to go back into the classroom but to pay for the tax cut. I assume, based on your presentation, that if that's really the direction the government goes, that would be a great concern to you as a parent.

Ms Machina: Absolutely. What I am looking for for my child is the best education for the dollar, and right now I don't feel I'm getting that.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Thank you very much for your presentation. I'm curious about what your vision is of the role of the parent advisory committee, because you say in your fourth paragraph that you would like parents to be able to play a supervisory role in managing schools that their children attend. Would you please explain to me how you see that role working?

Ms Machina: I don't anticipate them taking the place of the principal or the teachers. It's a very scary thought to have parents running a school. If you have the wrong parents in there, it could be very detrimental to the child's education. I'm not trying to take anything away from the teacher or the principal — they are the foundation of the school — but the parents should have a say in what is being maintained at the school.

Mrs Boyd: When you go on to say that you should have a say in the choices on curriculum or dealing with problem teachers, do you see yourself as having a formal role in the disciplinary process?

Ms Machina: It would be nice that if there was a problem and there was a grievance, it would go further than the school.

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Mrs Boyd: You know that we've just gone through a process of setting up the teachers' college.

Ms Machina: Right. A lot of parents feel that if there is a problem, there's nowhere for them to go. It's dealt with at the level of the teachers and it doesn't go anywhere from there. That's one of the problems.

Mrs Boyd: On choices of curriculum, would you see yourself or a council as being in the position of banning a book, for example?

Ms Machina: We had this problem at our school actually not very long ago and we are still working on that. Again, that would affect the freedom of the press and the constitutional right of the child. It would be nice to have some input into what is available to the children.

Mr Skarica: I'm looking at the Wells report myself and it has three areas that are being addressed by this legislation. One is that Mr Wells felt that sharing should take place between the boards that exist in Windsor-Essex, and that was in August 1993. Do you know what progress has been made, if any, towards sharing arrangements between coterminous boards?

Ms Machina: I don't know; I'm not aware.

Mr Skarica: That's fine. As well, he suggests that parent advisory committees should be set up to help establish positive linkages between parents and schools. Do you think that would be a benefit in your area?

Ms Machina: Sorry?

Mr Skarica: To strengthen parent advisory committees.

Ms Machina: I think the parents have a lot of input. There's a lot of potential there with the parents. They could have a positive effect on the school.

Mr Skarica: Finally, Mr Wells indicates that he recommends a reduction in the number of trustees and limiting their salaries. Could you comment on that? Do you think that would benefit or not benefit your area?

Ms Machina: It could make the trustees who would be available to the public more accountable to the public.

The Chair: Thank you very much for being here and taking the time to speak to us. We appreciate it.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Just on a point of order: The motion that was passed by the committee that was presented by Mr Skarica last Thursday in Midhurst, how is that being communicated to the minister?

The Chair: Would you refresh my memory with respect to the motion?

Interjection.

The Chair: I'll ask Mr Skarica to respond to that.

Mr Skarica: I don't know what the usual procedure is, but I can pass the motion on to the minister.

Mr Wildman: That would be helpful. The normal procedure would be, after a committee passes a motion, for the Chair of the committee to write a letter to the minister passing along the motion.

The Chair: That will be done, Mr Wildman. As you know, this is a bit of an unusual circumstance because I was not in the chair last Thursday, but that will be done.

Mr Wildman: I appreciate that, and thank you to Mr Skarica.

ONTARIO SCHOOL BOARD REFORM NETWORK

The Chair: May I call on the Ontario School Board reform Network: Mrs Beth Cooper. Welcome.

Mrs Beth Cooper: It's a pleasure to be here before you. I have heavy-duty briefs being circulated to all the members of the committee. I will base my remarks today

in the context of the reform network's brief to the commission, the former minister and the current Minister of Education.

The first principle of the reform network in recommendation 27, from the Legislature's own select committee on education was,

"To reaffirm the basic democratic principle that local control over education is centred in elected trustees, and to solidify the authority of trustees over board program and financial decisions by reforming the Education Act." This is attacked by Bill 104.

Local democracy works. Local elections work. Local trustee governance works. As a founding member of the reform network, I have seen two more waves of reform trustees, in both 1991 and 1994. Our brief shows 112 trustees in Toronto before the last election. I believe there are 88 now. In fact, prior to 1994, there were 2,132 trustees in Ontario. Our board went from 15 to 10. Reductions were occurring throughout the province. All that was needed was empowerment through the Education Act.

The reform network clearly outlines that boards and trustees should be reduced by as much as 50%. This is realistic, reasoned and sound downsizing. A further reduction risks dysfunction and dumbing down. It eliminates the effectiveness of both boards and trustees. This is the third "e" that belongs with economical and efficient, the effective delivery of a service.

Provincially, funding from the province is at the 1990-91 level, only the province pays less. In 1990-91, the province paid 45%; now it's quoted at 40%. I believe it's even less than this. Much has been made of the 16% increase in students versus the 120% increase in board spending.

As politicians, we all live in glass houses. In 1985, education cost \$6.8 billion. The Macdonald commission stated the provincial share was 46.5%. But the previous Tory government closed provincial institutions for exceptional students and mandated their accommodation in schools: high-cost and high-resource programs. Second, the Tories extended full funding to separate secondary schools: automatic duplication and cost. The NDP and the Liberals added employer health tax, employment equity, pay equity, low PTR, junior kindergarten.

All these are costly mandated additives and the boards have the responsibility to locally fund them. Unless the province tears out these costs and these programs, they will bear 100% of these costs. I can hardly wait to see the duplication and bureaucratic needs for four recognized systems.

Radical restructuring as outlined in the bill undermines an accountable system, because it entrenches even more the educrats at the ministry level. It weakens the power of the elected local arm, and in so doing increases the powers of local bureaucracies. We stated in 1993, "It is clear that unless school trustees take the initiative and propose new more responsive and democratic structures, they now face the real prospect of being excluded entirely from a reformed system of local education governance." Visionary comments come to life. I regret greatly that the reform trustee positions and models weren't considered for a truly reinvented and effective model.

Bill 104 does not empower trustees, does not strengthen or clarify roles; it castrates them. The pittance for honorarium opens the door to further abuse and special interests. My honorarium is \$11,500. That includes mileage. For time, effort and service availability, I have concluded that amounts to some 35 cents an hour for my community service. That's part-time service. Utilities commissioners receive more than this for one half-hour meeting a month. They receive \$8,000 in Windsor. You have dealt trustees two blows, this cap and the loss of the tax exempt status. We are your sole targets in this. It is not fair, and I believe you'll get what you pay for.

Bill 104 will not pass the Titanic test. The shifting of the power base and finances to the province will not right the system. Sink it, it will. The educational power structure is left intact with Bill 104 and this closes the door to true democratic change and the balance needed for an effective system.

British reforms and the most recent in New Brunswick are painfully aware that the reforms believed possible do not necessarily become reality. The envisioned reforms are hampered because the bureaucrats didn't change. In New Brunswick, there has been no change in curriculum rigour. I beg you to learn from these examples of known roadblocks. There is great unhappiness in New Brunswick and the possibility even exists to reinstate boards. The reform brief outlines several models for change, but the government has chosen a model that does not abolish but also does not democratize boards.

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The long history of school boards and trustees in Ontario goes to 1816. Property tax was solely dedicated to education, one of the reasons being to rid the streets of criminal waifs. The responsibility for education was the first responsibility ever given to communities. This has laid the firm foundation for a common, publicly elected, publicly funded system with local accountability assured through elected trustees.

The system needs overhaul and change, not abandonment in favour of centralized control and a hodgepodge, decentralized collection of school councils and volunteers. Education is a public resource too important to be left exclusively to the professionals. A redistribution of power is essential. We need a new system that has clear checks and balances for the province, for the boards, for the school councils.

Not only has the bill weakened public education through its balancing act with linguistic and religious rights, it fails to recognize that 70% of students, that's 1.6 million, are educated in public schools. Only public schools must be open and accessible to all. The other systems have inherent exclusionary rights. There is no acknowledgement of the 70% factor in the 33 boards plus 33 boards equals 66 boards. Education is too important to have simplistic solutions.

Taxpayer equity will not result in student equity, nor should it. Ontario is too diverse. That is why true empowerment for the local government in education is vital. I am passionate about democracy, especially locally driven democracy. I have been tenacious locally for accountability, accessibility and effective delivery of

education. It took use of the freedom of information laws to gain the report to parents and the testing policy at the Windsor board. This is the value to be found in locally elected, empowered trustees, and it's a far better report than I've ever seen from the province.

There is much in the briefs, recommendations that are prescriptive and specific. I was a PC candidate in 1987, just following the full-funding issue. From door-to-door experience I know and have felt the feelings of the common electorate and just how they can react to government-imposed change.

Recent comments from a New Brunswick Department of Education bureaucrat rang many alarm bells for me. He said that with technology we can reduce the need for many schools. We can replace teachers; technology is better than many. But the worst comment by far was that students can learn social and interpersonal skills from Internet chat lines. I believe there is a great deal more to be learned from and about humanity.

I must trust that this is not the attitude to be found within the Mowat Block. If it is, I fear then that as a province we are on that slippery slope towards a morally bankrupt society.

Please read the entire brief. As a society, we should learn from our history and the mistakes of those who came before us. Temper Bill 104 to offer enough checks and balances to provide an economical, efficient and effective reinvented education system. Strengthen the role of elected trustees. Strengthen the authority of boards. Redefine the role of local bureaucracies.

In closing, I commend you on some of the needed changes as seen through the Audit Act and with reservations in conflict of interest act changes. I again caution about reliance on the professionals without a strengthened local board and trustee structure. I firmly believe the Bill 104 scenario will be a disaster for education and for our children. I am shocked at the autocratic provisions contained in Bill 104. I know they are not democratic. Indeed, no one — no one — should be above the law.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Cooper. You've used up all of your time. I regret there won't be time for questions. I want to thank you on behalf of the committee for coming forward and sharing your views.

Mr Duncan: Madam Chair, I wish to place another motion, and you may want to deal with it later in the day, if it's appropriate at this point.

The Chair: All right. Why don't we circulate it? In the interests of time, perhaps we can deal with it just before the break unless you think it should —

Mr Duncan: Can I just read out the motion?

I move that:

Whereas Ontario's education system is vital for our children;

Whereas future economic development and growth will be closely linked to a top-quality education system;

Recognizing that business leaders ranked Canada's education system ahead of the United States in terms of its ability to meet the needs of a competitive economy (1996 World Competitiveness Report);

Also knowing that Ontario's graduation rate in 1993 was 84%, 2% higher than the national average and an improvement rate of 10% per decade since the 1960s;

Cognizant that according to the OECD and Statistics Canada, Canada has the highest post-secondary participation rate in the world. More than 40% of secondary school graduates go on to higher education; in Ontario the rate is 50%;

Also knowing that the Durham Board of Education won the 1996 Carl Bertelsman Foundation award for excellence, which recognizes the school system that best demonstrates an exemplary framework for school development in the world;

Recognizing that the government of Ontario has repeatedly stated that it wants to improve the quality of education in Ontario;

Also knowing that many citizens and taxpayers in Ontario want a full and public debate around education reform in Ontario;

Be it resolved that the standing committee on social development strongly urges the appointment of a select committee on education whose mandate will be to travel the province and conduct public hearings on the broad question of the future of education in Ontario, including but not limited to governance, curriculum, standards and accountability, financing, and future direction.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Duncan. With your indulgence, we'll defer it until just before the break so we allow people to present their briefs.

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ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION, WINDSOR DISTRICT

The Chair: May I call upon the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, Windsor district: Carol Harvey and Wayne Boughner. Welcome. Thank you very much for being here.

Mr Wayne Boughner: OPSTF Windsor District thanks this committee for the opportunity to bring forth their concerns about Bill 104. We are aware that this is nearly your last stop throughout the province and sincerely wish to bring some new concerns to this committee. However, most presentations will probably have a common theme as this particular piece of legislation is encumbered by ill-conceived ideas, poor planning and a lack of definition. Coupled with the above is the general lack of trust most unions and specifically most teachers have with the present government.

First and foremost, OPSTF is not opposed to the amalgamation of school boards, but is genuinely cautious of the intent and direction of Bill 104. In its present form, this proposed legislation violates the very nature of democracy, negates the rights of employees, threatens to cause turmoil throughout the province, ignores geographic limitations, places sweeping powers in the hands of relatively few people, who incidentally are not held accountable through any legal process presently enjoyed by the citizens of this country, and advocates time lines that are simply too short for proper consideration of such monumental changes.

To further our arguments, let me first quote our present Minister of Education. The following was stated in the Legislature in response to NDP education critic Bud

Wildman on January 28, 1997: "The commitment of our government is to meet the needs of every single individual student across the province, regardless of their circumstances. We will commit the funds that are necessary to do that because we are committed to student achievement in this province, committed to taking our students to the top of the class. We will do that."

We say this: Tell that to the students in this province who have lost JK programs. Tell that to the students in this province who have seen their class size increase significantly. Tell that to the teachers in this province who have lost their jobs due to downsizing, or to future teachers who now have to put their careers on hold while downsizing continues. Tell that to child care workers, custodial staff, secretaries and teachers' aides who have suffered job losses due to downsizing. Tell that to the students and parents of university aged children who have seen tuition fees double in the last two years. All of this was the direct result of the \$400 million already removed from the educational sector in the last two years.

This government has openly stated it wants to remove \$600 million more from the educational sector, but cannot do so without irreparable damage to our system. It is the belief of many of our members that this restructuring is just a ruse to take away more money from the system. We are concerned this is only an attempt to fund the ill-advised 30% provincial tax cut.

We must remember it was this minister, Mr John Snobelen, who created the educational crisis in the province when he assumed office. If the reduction in school boards was motivated by altruism for the betterment of education in this province and for the benefit of our students, we could agree with this legislation. However, we firmly believe that this is not the case. Too many issues are without answers.

The minister is putting the cart before the horse. First, this government wants to reduce the number of school boards, thus trustees. Then they want to examine the mechanisms that allow this. It simply cannot work that way. There are too many unanswered questions, too many areas of potential risk to the educational structure of this province.

We could present facts ad nauseam to counter many of the untruths and outright deceptions practised by this government, but that is not the purpose of this forum. To get specific, I would like to outline some of the concerns that we are experiencing in our everyday attempts to come to grips with this dilemma, for there is no other term that can adequately describe this bill.

A study of the amalgamation of Essex-Windsor was conducted at the request of the NDP member for Windsor when he was Minister of Education with the last government. Mr Wells, who conducted the study, demonstrated there would be no appreciable savings in said amalgamation. In fact, he pointed out that there could actually be an increase in costs for such an endeavour. His report is a matter of public record and available to any member of this committee who desires to follow up on it.

Granted, the amalgamation of boards would eliminate the duplication of services, reduce some senior administrative duties, allow for the creation of a purchasing conglomerate and combine computer services for some

modest cost savings. All of this would make sense if the dollars saved could be kept in the local economies. However, under the present structure, it would go into the coffers of the government and be used no doubt to finance areas other than education. It would certainly relieve the extra load that has been placed on the classroom by the social contract and the initial removal of \$400 million from the educational sector.

The following are some of the questions to which we have no answers and some of the questions that this government needs to examine before it enacts this bill:

What rules are going to apply to negotiations? Will we still operate under Bill 100 or will we be regulated by the Ontario Labour Relations Act? If we are assigned to the OLRA, will they have a process in place which can realistically resolve conflicts that occur, such as we have in place with Bill 100? If a dispute mechanism is not part of the solution, we will toss negotiations in this province into chaos.

How are collective agreements to be merged? Most areas enjoy specific language that addresses local concerns and unique situations applicable only to their individual board. Will we go to a new collective agreement while holding the old ones in place until consensus is reached? Do we aim for a middle position while guaranteeing previous provisions until all catch up? Do we redline higher salaries until lower ones catch up? Will there be language guaranteeing successor rights to protect current employees? We have noticed that this has already been addressed for senior administrators, and the lower level employees would certainly want to maintain the same rights.

What is the status of current grievances that have yet to be resolved? These issues deal with the daily machinations of each district and are of importance to the employees. This bill has yet to even address this.

What specific changes will occur to the Education Act, and what new regulations will accompany this bill?

Will there be a mechanism to resolve board turf wars? An impact study is needed so the specific financial responsibilities can be delineated.

Why is this government rushing into this so quickly? The timetable for change is simply too close — presently January 1, 1998 — for a proper job to be done. It would be better to approach this carefully, with much thought given to each stage. The general public would also have time to absorb the significant changes that are on the horizon. There is less than nine months available for such monumental change to take place.

Will there be a transition period so that adjustments can be taken into account? What assistance will come from the ministry to ease the amalgamation? When will the new boundaries be available for the public to see and will there be any input from them beforehand?

Along with the myriad unanswered questions is that omnipotent body called the Education Improvement Commission. This legislation creates a very powerful group which, in essence, answers to no one. The inability to challenge their decisions is an affront to the democratic process enjoyed in this country. Is this government so unsure of its direction that it must remove the cornerstone of accountability, the judicial process? We think so.

Other throwbacks from this legislation include the veiled threat to remove principals and vice-principals from the federations. This move could only serve to divide our ranks and has no basis in necessity other than to allow for a change in what a principal is somewhere down the road, say as a first step towards placing financial administrators rather than educational administrators at some future date. You need only look to the province of British Columbia to observe first hand what an administrative nightmare this has proven to be.

There is also the belief that this is just a forerunner to provincial negotiations so that vested benefits, such as retirement gratuity and sick leave credits, can be stripped in the name of fiscal responsibility.

In summary, the above-stated questions and areas of concern lead us to believe that Bill 104, in its present form, is a tool for the destruction of the educational system as we know it and can only lead to weakening the educational structure of this province by removing local input through the removal of local fund-raising powers, thus weakening ability to address unique concerns of each area.

There is no accountability to the voters of Essex county under the new proposed legislation. The weakened role of trustees does nothing to ensure top-quality competition among potential candidates. It seems that this government is satisfied in leaving the day-to-day operations of the schools in the hands of parents who do not want these awesome responsibilities and trustees who have had their roles diminished so much that they become nothing more than guardians of the piggybank, while our provincial government runs the show from a distance, dominated by their Common Sense budget, which has already proven to be sadly lacking in both the understanding of the needs of the classroom and the actual functioning of a school district. This bill has every appearance of a juggling act to reduce significantly the present level of service enjoyed by the students of this province.

Mr Wildman: You say that you think this bill is "just a ruse to take more money from the system" and then you pose a number of questions regarding the future of Bill 100, the teacher collective bargaining, and merging of contracts, the settlement of differences among boards that are to be amalgamated, the boundaries and so on.

Essentially, most of those questions are left to the Education Improvement Commission. The ministry itself doesn't know the answers to a lot of those questions, except we do know that the changes to Bill 100 are coming. They're going through the cabinet process now. I guess the major question is, what's the rush? You posed that question. Do you have any ideas about why there is such a hurry, why this has to be in place before January 1?

Mr Boughner: Simply put, there are collective agreements coming due this September, collective agreements coming due next September. We have to know what rules you operate by, and collective agreements are not negotiated overnight. Collective agreements are negotiated over a period in excess of eight months to a year, and much thought goes beforehand into these presentations before we even approach negotiations.

The bottom line: We're starting now and our contract is not up until August 1998 and we have absolutely no idea what direction this will take, and that truly is a dilemma.

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Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): Thank you, Mr Boughner. You've listed your areas of concerns: negotiations, the Labour Relations Act, Bill 100, dispute resolution, collective agreements, redlining salaries, successor rights, grievances, board turf wars, removing principals and VPs from the bargaining units, among others. None of those have anything to do with what I'm sure you and I will agree is the purpose of education, and that is to educate children. I'm sure it was an oversight on your part not to mention that. Could you explain to me what impact you think Bill 104 will have on the education of children?

Mr Boughner: First of all, we differ in your summary. I'll tell you that right now. Anything that reflects upon the operation of schools, whether it be through collective agreements, whether it be through teachers and how they operate within the system, it most certainly has a great bearing on Bill 104. The amalgamation of school boards reflects a change to how everyone within it will operate. Everyone within it has a piece of it and everyone within it wants to see it done rationally, sanely and at a pace that is understood by all.

Mr Duncan: Mr Boughner, the OPSTF has put forward a number of positions with respect to issues such as curriculum, finance, governance, accountability. Would it be the position of your organization that this bill should not be dealt with in isolation but rather that we need to look at the broader questions in education and allow for a complete and full public input into all these questions?

Mr Boughner: Shortly put, yes.

Mr Duncan: Would you say, then, that the hidden agenda is not on the table, that we need to deal with the broader questions in order to talk about meaningful education reform?

Mr Boughner: I'd agree with that, yes.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Boughner, for being here this morning and sharing your views with us.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, first, as a point of record, the report that was done on proposals for school board amalgamation in Windsor and Essex county for the former government by Tom Wells, a former Conservative Minister of Education, has been tabled for all committee members. I would just draw their attention to that report today.

Second, if I may, I have a number of submissions to the committee which I would like to place on the record.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mrs McLeod: The first is from the Dryden District Roman Catholic Separate School Board; the second from the Kenora Women Teachers' Association, Red Lake Women Teachers' Association and the Dryden Women Teachers' Association; the third from the Kenora unit of OECTA; and the fourth from the Kenora District Roman Catholic Separate School Board.

I place these on the record of the committee as submissions to the committee, but I would also like to express my appreciation to you, Madam Chair, for having

taken the time to have heard these submissions in person by travelling to the Kenora area.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We'll have those copied and distributed for members of the committee.

ESSEX COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: I call upon the Essex County Board of Education. Mrs Flood, welcome. We're happy to have you here to present to the committee. You have 15 minutes, which you can use as you wish. If time permits, the members will ask you some questions.

Mrs Joan Flood: I am pleased to introduce myself, Joan Flood, chairperson of the Essex County Board of Education. On behalf of the Essex County Board of Education, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts and concerns with you on Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act.

Effective January 1, 1998, the Essex County Board of Education and the Windsor Board of Education will amalgamate into one district school board. The Essex County Board of Education is committed to working closely with the Windsor Board of Education to ensure a smooth transition for students and staff. We will strive to protect program integrity for students in the classroom, particularly in the area of special education. As all functions are merged, best and exemplary practices will be recognized and implemented. Initial meetings have been held with the senior administration of both boards and a joint meeting has been held with trustees. We are extremely pleased with the progress of our initial meetings and believe that local, rather than provincial, processes and decisions must be encouraged.

The focus of the Essex County Board of Education has consistently been on the students in the classroom. We have consistently worked very diligently and cooperatively for the advancement of public education in Essex county in a financially responsible fashion. We have conscientiously directed money to the classroom through restructuring, sharing services, and creative programming. It is recommended that the new funding model recognize these past efficiencies achieved by boards.

Our board currently shares transportation, media centre services, courier services, central office facilities and continuing education programs with our coterminous board. This provides a significant savings to the Essex county ratepayers, particularly in the area of transportation.

Further, the board supports other shared services, such as the gas consortium, the curriculum consortium and the purchasing consortium between school boards and other public sector institutions in the area. It is recommended that legislation protect and encourage shared services.

In October 1995 the Essex County Board of Education conducted a public meeting subsequent to the release of the interim report of the Ontario School Board Reduction Task Force. One of the issues arising from this public input included maintaining community schools. The specific concern expressed: Would an amalgamated board be less responsive to the rural community of Essex county? Our board currently operates 29 elementary schools and eight secondary schools. These schools are a

well-established component of their respective rural communities. We are committed to community schools and we need assurance in the legislation that they will be protected.

The Essex County Board of Education values the contributions of parents and other partners involved in education and believes the quality of the programs and services offered to its students can be improved and enhanced by building stronger board, staff, parent, student and community relations. In accordance with the Ministry of Education and Training requirements, our schools are adapting their existing parent associations' mandate and membership to meet the requirements for school advisory councils.

During this transition, parents have expressed concerns regarding the increased role the legislation will incorporate. A small nucleus of parents traditionally take on the responsibilities in each school. The consensus is that they wish to continue to work with the school in an advisory and assistive role. It is recommended that the existing model for school advisory councils be maintained and that their role remain as advisory.

The new role of the trustee must be clarified. We must not lose the democratic advantages and qualities of the Ontario school trustee. If I can regress just a bit, when we talk about the quality of the school trustee, I dearly wish this government would stop being so negative about trustees. Although there may be concerns in other areas of the province, certainly that is not true with our board. Our board has always worked very diligently and conscientiously for our students, ensuring that the money stays in the classroom.

I hope this message gets back to our Premier because this past weekend there was a strong message again from our Premier indicating that we really don't have any self-worth. That doesn't make any one of us feel very good. All the trustees here give of their time and are very supportive to our students, so I would really like that support from our government as well.

School boards are an integral part of the democratic government and civil society. It is vital to have some form of direct community input into running our schools beyond centralized decision-making at Queen's Park plus parent councils at 5,000 schools. A trustee's responsibility is to advocate for decisions which will better serve the board's entire jurisdiction, while parent councils advocate for their own students in their own schools.

Trustee representation formula is another concern. A decision is approved by a majority vote at the board table. Should the representation for Windsor residents exceed the representation for Essex county residents, the voice of the county resident, through their trustee, will not be acknowledged. It is recommended that an equitable representation of trustees from each board be maintained for amalgamated district school boards.

1250

Bill 104 establishes an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition of existing boards to district school boards; determine distribution of assets, liabilities, and transfer of staff; assist with and approve 1997 budgets of existing boards; and provide guidelines on appointments, hiring and promotion of staff. This

transfer of responsibility to the Education Improvement Commission, effective January 13, 1997, has virtually removed the power and responsibility from the elected representatives of existing school boards. During the amalgamation process it is recommended that local solutions be provided for, and encouraged, within the legislation.

The Education Improvement Commission is empowered to establish and delegate powers to education improvement committees. The local committees will be considering issues such as security of property, financial or personal information about an employee, and labour relations. It is recommended that education improvement committees include locally elected school trustees and senior board staff, be given clear mandates, and consult and communicate with existing schools boards in an open environment.

Bill 104 does not address the planned changes to the funding process; however, the province is taking education off the residential tax base and replacing the funding with provincial grants. These changes in the funding of education will eliminate the need to direct school support for the purpose of designating attendance at either a public school or a separate school. This implies that students will be eligible to attend the school of their choice. This implied open access has in effect provided one publicly funded system and initiates a competitive system whereby schools are vying for students. It is recommended that provision for student access from junior kindergarten to OAC be clarified for boards under the new funding model.

Finally, the current recommended configuration of Ontario district school boards does not reflect a fundamental of democracy that we have enjoyed under the present Education Act: representation by population. The Roman Catholic school system, representing approximately 600,000 students, is allocated a total of 33 English and French school boards. The public school board system, which serves nearly 1.5 million students, has been allocated a total of 33 English and French school boards. It is recommended that the configuration of district school boards be further considered and reflect an equitable representation of the population served.

I have appreciated the opportunity to address the committee and I thank you for receiving the concerns of the Essex County Board of Education.

Mr Skarica: Thank you very much for your presentation, Mrs Flood. The Wells report indicated that savings could be achieved by both the Windsor board and your board by your getting together and doing cooperative ventures on purchasing and that type of thing. Has that occurred in the last three years since that report, and if it has, could you tell us what has happened?

Mrs Flood: Yes, it certainly has happened. The director and the chairs of the four boards have been meeting on a regular basis and have been addressing issues on where we can save. I'm pleased to say that the Essex county public board and the Windsor board now share the purchasing service. Our purchasing department has moved over to the Windsor board, so that is one area. Previous to this, we were looking at transportation for all four boards rather than just the two. We're looking at computer services, so that has been done. Certainly the

Tom Wells report is the report that we believe should have been implemented here.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Good afternoon, Joan.

Mrs Flood: Good afternoon, Bruce.

Mr Crozier: I want to emphasize what you've just said, that in the past the Essex county public school board and the Essex county separate school board have been a model when it comes to sharing of costs, particularly in the area of transportation.

I want to ask you, though, on page 4 of your submission — which is a very complete one, thank you — when you say that Bill 104 does not address the planned changes in funding, I know a concern with the Wells report and with any discussion of amalgamation of boards in the Essex county area was that you in the public school board have run a very efficient ship and that your cost per student has been lower than that in the cities. How do you think the past, that being the fact, will be affected in the future, with your concern towards funding between two boards? In other words, do you think that you being efficient will hurt you? How do you feel about it?

Mrs Flood: I think you're going to see our costs going up, because again we have been a very efficient board. We educate our elementary students at \$25 a day, which is lower than day care. We do that through our shared services with our coterminous board. Our dollars are kept in the classroom. The Windsor board has different needs. They have a higher multicultural area maybe than we do, but I think you're going to see our costs going up. Our collective agreements are not as rich as the Windsor board's, so I believe you're going to see our dollars are going to go up.

Mr Crozier: But you would hope the grants reflect that, then.

Mrs Flood: I would sincerely hope the grants would reflect that.

Mrs Boyd: Thank you very much for your presentation, Joan. On page 3 you talk about your fear as a rural board of being flooded by more representation from the city board. You know in my area of London, now London-Middlesex-Oxford-Elgin, obviously that's the same fear, particularly if there are only allowed to be 12 trustees. Can you talk a little bit more about how your board feels about that and what you think would happen, for example, if a school were to be closed or if a need for a new school were to be identified? How do you think you would fare?

Mrs Flood: I don't think we would fare very well if we didn't have equal representation, the reason being that at the county board, although we do offer education at a very frugal point, we still are committed to our eight community secondary high schools. We have a policy saying that we are going to preserve those schools. We see them as an integral part of that community. Although we don't need eight community schools for the number of students we have in secondary education, it's very important to keep that community school and I don't believe that once we're amalgamated they will have the same interest in those community schools that we do.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs Flood, for your eloquent presentation. It's much appreciated.

WINDSOR COUNCIL OF HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

The Chair: May I call upon the Windsor Council of Home and School Associations: Ms Bette Turner.

As Ms Turner makes her way to the table, I'd like to address the members of the audience for just a minute. We're very grateful to have you here, that you've taken the time to be with us. Just two things: There will be many things that will be said during the course of the day that you will agree with or disagree with and you may feel the urge to express yourselves, and that's understandable. However, bear in mind that individuals do have a right to express opposing views. That hasn't happened yet with respect to the audience, but it may. Bear in mind as well that when you interject, you're taking away from the time that presenters have. So I would caution you to limit participation as much as possible.

Ms Turner, you have the floor. I would ask you to introduce your co-presenter. We thank you both for appearing here and we're looking forward to your presentation.

Mrs Bette Turner: Good afternoon, members of the standing committee on social development. JoAnn Percy is also a past president of the Windsor Council of Home and School Associations. She's here with me this afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to submit and present the input of our organization in respect to Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act. Be aware that our provincial organization has made a presentation to you. Therefore we will deal primarily with local issues.

Our submission clarifies our support for the concept of district boards. The primary focus of our concerns is the process as revealed by the act, as well as the absence of information to appropriately evaluate the process. This lack of information, combined with short time lines, hinders a collaborative and democratic effort to reform education. On behalf of students and the young people of Ontario, we trust our concerns will be integrated within your initiatives and actions. We've provided you with information explaining our organization and policies.

1300

Three provincial governments have said they would like to reduce the number of school boards, and this government has initiated the process with Bill 104. In 1992, the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations petitioned the minister and the Ministry of Education and Training to strongly encourage school boards to amalgamate mutual services, starting with coterminous boards. This petition and our support to reduce the number of boards in the province is based upon two distinctive policies. Equity of education as a concept has been supported by our membership since 1964. We have promoted equal educational opportunities for all students in Windsor, Ontario and Canada. Also, it is our position to promote one publicly funded system to address the uniqueness of religion, language and culture, and to ensure the ultimate in efficiency.

Will the format of the proposed district boards eliminate divisiveness and concurrently be cost-efficient? Currently, 1.5 million students are registered within the public school system and 500,000 students are registered

within the alternative school systems. Minister Snobelen announced in January the number of boards halved as follows: There will be 55 English-language boards, 29 public and 26 separate, and the existing French-language boards, four public and seven separate. Proposing one half, or 33, of the district boards be established to represent the current 70% of the ratepayers in Ontario who support the public system does not appear to be equal nor democratic. A more equitable and representative formation of district boards may be facilitated under the notion of one publicly funded system.

The minister has projected a November 1997 election for trustees to take office as of January 1, 1998. In addition, Bill 104 proposes an option to provide trustees an honorarium of up to \$5,000 per year. Short time lines and limited information are compounding our concerns. Will trustees be elected by ward or at large? How would such boundaries be defined, and when would the public become aware of this information? We believe an informed decision at the ballot box is a critical component of the democratic process that may be overlooked.

Also, we're concerned about the qualifications and expertise that the honorarium compensation may realistically attract. Sincere and qualified candidates need to be attracted and able to at least cover their expenses. We appreciate the abuse and cost ineffectiveness that has stimulated the proposed honorarium and agree it is an area for improvement. Our local school board has demonstrated responsible and effective changes to minimize abuse and reduce trustee costs. A realistic honorarium and alternative tactics relevant to trustee cost appears to be a functional and viable approach.

Last year, volunteers representing different educational partners formed the mandated school councils. An absence of ministry guidance and training did little to enhance the skills and knowledge of school council members. Windsor school communities have school council members who perceive political action as an appropriate advisory function. Other local school councils struggle with power confusion: Who sets the agenda?

In accordance with policy memorandum 122, the elected school council chair is responsible for setting the agenda. The memorandum fails to state that in accordance with the Education Act, the principal is responsible for all activities conducted on behalf of the school. Therefore, responsible principals review and approve the school council chair's proposed agenda as part of their job. No ministry guidelines have been issued to facilitate the collaboration of old and new parent-volunteer groups or associations. Additional confusion is common and is demonstrated by power struggles between groups of volunteers.

Memorandum 122 recognizes established parent-volunteer groups by stating: "The school councils are not intended to replace such organizations, which continue to make valuable contributions within the education community." Home and school organizations have demonstrated a long history of effective and beneficial contributions to education and the welfare of children. Our history is not littered with power struggles. Our members have the opportunity to participate in training workshops annually and our members are knowledgeable and

informed. Our activities are presented in a non-partisan format.

It is from this context that we seek a leadership role in the status of school councils. Bill 104 firmly establishes a preference for volunteers to perform many of the functions of local trustees. Too many school councils and volunteer members are confused or struggling with power to effectively contribute within an advisory capacity. Shifting the advisory status of school councils to governance would demonstrate grave irresponsibility.

As proposed, the Education Improvement Commission will be responsible for investigating the role of school councils. We suggest the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations be represented on and lead the Education Improvement Commission's responsibilities as related to school councils.

Our review of Bill 104 has prompted deep concerns in relation to an absence of data, detail and information. The compounding effect of short time lines compels us to urgently suggest such topic areas be addressed immediately. Bill 104 endorses an incomplete package of changes that are directly or indirectly correlated: the funding model, fiscal responsibilities between school boards and governments, future negotiations, curriculum and program delivery, attrition and disruption of educational staff, and outsourcing of educational services.

We are particularly concerned with how the incomplete package of changes will affect program and curriculum delivery. Currently, our board of education delivers specific programs that reflect the preference and needs of our community. Specific examples of unique Windsor programs are an enhanced special education program, an enhanced arts centre, and a junior kindergarten, to name just a few. How will these and the unique programs of other boards be maintained? What portion of the funding model may or may not address the support of unique programs? Who is more familiar with our community and the communities of other boards?

Funding, control and program delivery represent a concurrent and interdependent educational issue. This aspect has been neglected within the context of Bill 104. There are several home and school policies that reflect a broad scope and diversity, a demand and a need for local unique programs and control.

We are concerned that Bill 104 does not stipulate any detailed guidelines to address the attrition and disruption of educational staff that must accompany the formation of district boards. Recently our board facilitated a collaborative effort to identify and honour our educational staff as heroes. How will our heroes be accommodated and how will the heroes across the province of Ontario be accommodated?

We have serious reservations concerning the notion of outsourcing educational services. Of noted concern are supporting staff personnel: office, custodial, school aides, social workers, child and youth workers, early childhood educators, interpreters, developmental service workers, technicians, school clerks, speech pathologists, psychologists, and the list goes on. The service such personnel supply is not limited to their job descriptions. We note an intangible and indispensable service that support staff deliver: Intimate familiarity with our students, parents and

school community residents enhances the high level of security we expect in our schools. How can strangers from an outsourcing program deliver this imperative and intangible service? Some of our members articulated, "If you think internal security is in jeopardy, consider outsourcing's effect on the status of zero tolerance for violence."

One final note is critical, an area that Bill 104 does not address. The entire educational package is in a state of change; public services are in a state of change. The combined pressures are creating communities in turmoil. Long-range planning, assessment and consultation are evidently overdue. Many of the projected reforms within the context of Bill 104 have been established in other provinces. We have heard negative testimony from those who have been there and done that. Can we learn from the mistakes of others?

There's nothing wrong with change, but change for the sake of change is neither positive nor cost-effective.

1310

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Thanks so much for coming today to present.

You spent some time talking about the creation of school councils and their role. In my limited experience with some of the inner-city schools in Windsor, Toronto and Ottawa, what I found only in looking at the breakfast programs that exist in those schools is they've been organized primarily by staff people in that school who recognized a need for breakfast programs. They found that the majority of students they were dealing with had parents whose first language was not English; it was Chinese, Lebanese, Portuguese etc. As new Canadians, they were still learning what it meant to be a volunteer. From many countries of origin, our new Canadians are still coming to grips with the role of a volunteer because their home country doesn't have that same thought as yet.

Given that they were having difficulties in even bringing parents out to assist in serving breakfast in many cases, how do you feel those inner-city schools are going to get out into their community and into their parent group and have parents participate at a very sophisticated level like a school council with the outline we're seeing so far?

Mrs Turner: It's going to take time, and because schools are state-operated, many of the new Canadians are afraid of them. If you look at the makeup of the community we live in right here in Windsor, it has about the same mix as the Metro Toronto area has for immigrant populations. You'll find that it takes two or three generations before people are involved in doing that sort of thing.

The other thing is that the new Canadians are too busy trying to establish themselves financially to have time to even look at anything else. As long as the children are going to school, that's it.

Mr Wildman: Thanks very much for your presentation. With regard to school councils, would it be your view that whatever happens — I understand what you said about the turmoil in terms of all the change — school councils should remain advisory in their role in terms of the operation of the school and that parents should be influencing what happens in the school and to

their children but that it should be advisory rather than administrative?

Mrs Turner: From our organization's point of view, yes, and from the information I've received from people on them, because I do serve on one as a community person.

Mr Carroll: We've had some recent information published by OSSTF that the cost of education in Ontario is about \$1,300 per student higher than it is in Alberta. Based on the results of some recent testing, our students don't fare as well as the students in Alberta do. There have been several studies, royal commissions; lots of things have been studied.

A couple of questions: Do you agree that we need to have some change, and would you agree that it's now time to get on with the change?

Mrs Turner: There's nothing wrong with change. The problem is that Alberta has a more homogeneous group of students to test than Ontario.

Mr Carroll: So that accounts for the difference in the cost too?

Mrs Turner: Yes, definitely.

Mr Wildman: They don't have as many English-as-a-second-language groups.

The Chair: I'm going to allow Ms Percy to speak, if you don't mind.

Mrs JoAnn Percy: I should mention that Mrs Turner has lived in Alberta, and as a Canadian representative for central Ontario to the home and school association, she has an overview that not all of us can reach and she has had input from other people as well.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Turner and Ms Percy, for being here. We do appreciate the time that you took.

Interjection.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, please, this really doesn't help.

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION, ESSEX COUNTY

The Chair: The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Essex county: Karl Dean. Welcome, Mr Dean. Thank you very much for being here this morning.

Mr Karl Dean: I will guarantee you that I will be somewhat a breath of fresh air to probably most of these hearings. I am aiming to be the shortest presenter, not in physical stature but in length of dissertation.

I'd like to suggest to the government that they might change the name of Bill 104. It should be called "the omnibus bill for education." I think that would be more appropriate. As I see it — I've taken a look at Bill 104 — it is a smokescreen. It is about saving money. It is about downloading costs of education to municipalities. It is about taking control of education. It is about removing democratic representation and funding independence of local school boards. What Bill 104 is not is about improving educational opportunities for students. It is not about amalgamation and it is not about democracy.

The problems we see are outsourcing, job losses, an unfriendly school environment for the students to learn

in, less money to the classroom. How can we amalgamate in a short period of time and not understand the rules of the game? No rules have been given.

It was interesting to hear the chairperson of my board speak just a little while ago and comment on the fact that there have been numerous meetings between the two boards that are intended to be amalgamated, Windsor and Essex; we tend to think of that as Windex. What causes us a great deal of concern as educators and as representatives of employees is that nowhere in this process is there a place for employee representation. We need some rules to this game if we're going to play appropriately and if we're going to effect changes in the system that will be fair and equitable.

We recommend that this government withdraw Bill 104. Go back to the drawing board. Rethink what you've done.

If amalgamation was the intent of this government, then I would suggest that you review the 1968 legislation that imposed a far greater reduction of school boards in this province. That government did not need the extraordinary powers this government seems to. That government was able to define, by legislation, the parameters of school board amalgamation, a transition process that was open and transparent and included guarantees for all board employees.

My final suggestion to this government is that you be open and honest with the people of Ontario. Lay all of the cards on the table at the same time so we can see what the game is. Thank you very much.

Mrs Boyd: Thank you very much for coming today, Mr Dean. You certainly have hit the nail on the head with such a very brief and succinct proposal. I'm really interested in the issues as you put them out in terms of this bill being about saving money and your concern that all the cards aren't on the table. Because if, as we are aware, there are going to be changes to Bill 104 that are going to cabinet, and we do not yet have the reform to education financing, there are a huge number of pieces that are missing here, aren't there?

Mr Dean: Absolutely. It's just not well thought out, it's not well planned and we wish some more thought would go into this.

Mrs Boyd: Is it your concern that this propaganda that the government has been giving about taking education off the property tax is going further to destroy the public's commitment to public education?

Mr Dean: Absolutely. If you remove the local school board's ability to tax, to generate money to meet the needs of the school board and the community, if you remove that and you've downloaded the other things on to the municipalities, you set things up so that municipalities may have to determine if they want to pave roads or provide service in the schools, and that's fundamentally wrong. The reason education was put in the hands of the tax base was to allow for the students. Students do not have the representation that we do and we must maintain that ability.

Mr Wildman: I noticed your concern with regard to the friendly environment for learning and the question of outsourcing. What is your reaction to Mr Snobelen's

definition of the classroom and saying a number of things, such as custodial care, clerical, principals, vice-principals, librarians, psychologists, all these are outside of the classroom and therefore should be treated in a different way and thus can be outsourced perhaps?

Mr Dean: I disagree with Minister Snobelen's and Ernst and Young's assessment of what's inside and what's outside the classroom. I believe all of those people you mentioned contribute to the educational environment for our students. One of our major concerns is that if the government gets this education employment commission, gives them the power that they seem to be intent on giving them, outsourcing will be the rule, not the exception. You could create a situation where you have people in the schools working with our children — my children, your children, your children's children — who are not part of our local community, who we don't know, who are not employed by the board. The screening processes and so on — I mean, you go into a school in Essex county or anywhere in this province and everyone knows who people are. When you start to do the outsourcing and money becomes the focus, then you lose that ability.

Mr Wildman: So there's a question of safety.

Mr Dean: Yes.

1320

Mr Skarica: Sir, I'd like to read you a part of a presentation given by Water MacLeod, a trustee for the Sudbury board and he had this to say — I'm reading from his brief:

"Many statements have been made by various organizations and individuals concerning the consolidation of school boards.

"The opposition supports changes in administration, but objects to the undemocratic and paternalistic way in which the government has proceeded. The third party says the government is preoccupied with the structure at the expense of equality in education. Trustees and trustee organizations have expressed concerns that with fewer trustees and larger units of administration many small municipalities will not be represented. Federations have stated that the reorganization of boards may dilute the quality of education."

Do you agree with those comments?

Mr Dean: I'd like to see his entire document before I agree with anything.

Mr Skarica: All right. He goes on to say that those statements were made in 1968, prior to the amalgamation of boards with the present structure. The reason I mention it is you asked us to go to back into 1968 and that's what was said at that time in criticism of the proposed amalgamation.

Mr Dean: I guess the only response, if you're looking for a response, is that obviously in 1968 they had the right plan so if I were you I'd go back and look at that.

Mr Skarica: In 1968, an example of what happened in Ottawa was that the Carleton secondary school board had a number of schools that were amalgamated but they were concerned about the amalgamation and many of them went into debt. The reason they went into debt was that small schools wanted to spend money so that they wouldn't lose out in the amalgamated board. The net

effect of it was that the Carleton secondary board was saddled with debt. How do you propose to prevent that in any future amalgamation? Because that's what did happen — I'm not saying in all boards — but as an example, in 1968.

Mr Dean: I don't know. I'm not a finance person. I'm sure there are ways.

Mrs McLeod: I'm one of those ancient beings who was actually around during the school board amalgamations in 1968 and I think there are several differences. One is that, first of all, the amalgamations made some geographic sense, and certainly one of the concerns we've heard consistently on this committee is that the amalgamations don't make geographic sense. The other was that we were going from a very large number of boards to what was considered to be a very reasonable number of boards, and now we're going to something that people consider to be unreasonable in terms of representation. Another was that there were very clear transition plans put in place that guided the process. Even with all of that, my recollection is and any research that I've read of it is that there were no cost savings. In fact, the costs increased for boards after the 1968 amalgamation. It's hard to see how this amalgamation is suddenly going to lead to savings for the classroom.

Having said that, I also wanted to ask you about the processes. With regard to the 1968 transition processes that were put in place, particularly in the area of dealing with harmonization of contracts, we have asked for that information to be provided to the committee. It could be a very important guide to doing some amendments to this legislation. It's clear that the government has not looked at it because it's very difficult still to compile it. I hope we are going to have access to that background before we do clause-by-clause on Wednesday. I guess that's one of the frustrations, that not only have they not put the transition plans in place, but that they're rushing the legislation through so that by Wednesday we have to be dealing with it.

I'd ask you very specifically, because you've talked about the climate, what kind of climate do you see if this is rushed through to this extent that as of December 31, 1997, your legal employers essentially disappear? There is some suggestion by Mr Cooke that maybe the existing contracts will be maintained until there can be some renegotiation. I'm not sure that's the government's position, but even if they are, what climate does it create if you have employees for the same board working under different contracts and different salaries? What do you see as being the climate under this?

Mr Dean: To be very brief, and I know that's unusual for me, all I see is chaos. It's unbelievable that the plans for this amalgamation process are going to come out, I anticipate, in the form of regulations. I don't know, do you get to debate regulations? They're just going to be laid on. So there won't be any input into the regulations, and I think that's a sham. I think that's a travesty. I see chaos. That's all I see. You've all heard just way too many unanswered questions in this entire process.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Dean, for coming here and speaking to us this morning.

ESSEX COUNTY ROMAN CATHOLIC
SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD,
ELEMENTARY PARENT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Chair: The Essex County Roman Catholic Separate School Board, Elementary Parent Advisory Committee: Rick Macdonald, Catherine Tobin, Cathy Beaudry and Beth Warren. Welcome all. We are delighted to have you.

Mr Rick Macdonald: We are today representing school councils in the Essex county area. The four of us represent 30 years of school council experience in total. We're going to open some eyes today in our presentation. You're going to see something that you probably haven't seen across the province in your hearings.

At some point in time, I'm going to be doing my presentation on overheads and slides as well. I would appreciate it if you could maybe turn your chair around and you can listen to me while you're watching what we're doing up there. I will go to the screen to do some pointing.

We represent 19 school councils in the county of Essex for the Essex County Roman Catholic Separate School Board. Our school councils have been up and operating for anywhere from 10 to 25 years. Lately we've been pulled into the mix as a necessity rather than as providing the school uniforms, soup days and things like that. Our parent councils didn't need to be mandated. Because of our lack of funds in this area, we became a necessity in our assessment-poor board.

If you take a look at the overhead we have presented right now, I'm leading off with "Parent Councils Are The Wrong Way To Go." That's an article done by Gerald Caplan, who was the co-chair of the royal commission. By the time you're finished today, you're going to see that without us, I'd hate to see what our system would be like down here; the parents, the mothers, the fathers, and the total active roles they play in the educational system in Essex county.

In the best of times not a lot of money had to be spent, but we've had to expand our responsibilities as parents in our school councils. We've had to buy textbooks, audio-visual equipment, computers, science and technology equipment, library books, gym equipment and office machines.

This is the play equipment that's in a school of 500 kids. This has been the play equipment there for ages. What we've done is we have gone in as school councils and parents actively involved and we've put in safety-conscious play equipment. Want a shock? That piece of equipment right there four or five years ago cost the school council \$32,000. All our school councils have been very actively involved in upgrading what we need in the school yards.

1330

If you take a look here, asphalt, completely safety-wise. We as parents — mothers and fathers — did the asphalt here. We supply the basketball courts. We do the storage bins. No place for school councils to put their equipment, so put the equipment in a storage bin that the school council bought.

The asphalt repairs are necessary because of safety hazards. Here's a school where we need asphalt, but right now there are no funds to put the asphalt in. We supply the soccer standards here as well as the basketball standards.

Another school. We improved the habitat area. This is an elementary school. This school has 900 kids. We've got areas for the kids to sit down, converse, have lunches.

Just to show you right now, the parents did all the work, the habitat, the walkways, the tree planting and the track around the perimeter of the football pitch or the soccer pitch to the tune of better than \$150,000 in the last few years.

We supply office equipment for students to have a more comfortable environment to deal with when talking to a principal or teachers. We provide the equipment, the couches, the internal equipment, computers, workstations.

This stuff is all there because parents have worked together to do it. This isn't just one school, this is a number of schools.

Computer equipment, labs, we're doing this. In the last two years we've spent probably close to \$40,000 on computer equipment for this lab. Not only do we do the lab, we do the tables, we do the blinds that are down. This is one of three small windows in this area. We do the fans for moving the air around. We do the carpet for breathing problems. A musty old carpet's been there for years. We've replaced it. We've painted it. It wouldn't get done without the school councils.

Again, another shot. We use our lab here not only as a computer lab but also our library books are over there as well. This is the extent of a library right here in an elementary school that in the past year and a half has had \$15,000 invested — \$10,000 in the last two months — in the books. That's the total extent of the library. It's got a brand-new encyclopaedia set that's just gone in, and \$10,000 bought roughly 560 books to go into the stacks.

This is another library. This is an extremely good library. It's got lots of books. The parents have put most of the money into those libraries.

Here we've got television sets and other peripheral equipment that's necessary for the operation. The stage. The area here was paid for by the parents, and the decor. Nothing fancy but put in by the parents.

We are also involved with community efforts. The green area. And, you see, kids. We have a vested interest in this presentation, more so than anybody else here. We are the parents of the kids who go to these schools, and our vested interest is the kids.

The playground area. I'm just going to show you something here. We've got to take care of the health and safety problems in the schools because there's no money. Right now, as of this past week, before the kids went back to school, we put a JK — this is the JK area. This little piece of equipment here was \$10,000 and that's about \$8,000. This is what we're replacing, these two yellow things which will be coming out, which by today's safety standards aren't acceptable, this and this. What we've also done is we've taken the fence here. We've spent probably \$20,000 in this little JK area.

This is another shot of the fencing as it's going up.

This is a completed JK area in one of the other schools — again, school councils, parents, active participants — fenced, with areas for the kids to play, teachers and kids to sit at picnic tables. The habitat area is here. Each one of these is a separate garden growing separate things.

This is another habitat area in another school. A pond here and all these areas in here are set up so the kids can plant different things. Each of these bushes is set up for different types of birds, so the kids in the JK and kindergarten classes can see the birds and butterflies coming into these areas during the school day.

Another school with a habitat area for the students to come and sit and talk outside the school, to have lessons taught. This is elementary school as well.

The community efforts we make as school councils: We work with ERCA, which is the environmental group in our area, cleaning up creek beds and river banks. Students are all actively involved.

Planting trees: I think it was 1,000 or 1,500 trees planted in certain areas. The kids all did this. They're all participating in the community with the teachers and the parents.

Here we are doing cleanup stuff, one of the schools doing a cleanup.

Environmentally green school: This is a goal that a lot of the schools are setting up right now. They want to be green schools.

Portables: We've got a lot of them. The parents played an active role; all six school councils played an active role in getting additions put on six schools. We worked for over a year on it. The six schools are going ahead as of this March.

Again, portables. We've got a lot of portables here.

That's our last one in that group.

The province-wide problem of overcrowding in schools: There are over 12,000 portables in this province as of today. What's the problem? Well, you listen to people talk and you get ideas, but parents, business people, male and female, mothers and fathers, can come up with some tremendous ideas.

One of the problems is the total lack of communication between municipalities. Our school council as a group of 19 schools has a committee that looks now at all plans of subdivisions going up. We've got to have sewers, we've got to have parks, but nobody says we've got to have schools. If you're putting up 1,500 houses, you're going to need some schools there to educate the kids. They plan for the vacant land on the plan, but no schools. That doesn't pay for the school, and you can't educate your kids on a piece of vacant land.

Mrs Beth Warren: EPAC stands for the elementary parent advisory committee. We are from the Essex County Roman Catholic Separate School Board. We meet once a month. We hand out newsletters and agendas to all schools. We have elected officials from all 19 elementary schools that come to EPAC, but any parent in our system is welcome to come. We run a very informal meeting. Although we have a protocol, we find that parents aren't as intimidated as perhaps attending a trustee or a board meeting. We have become a network for these 19 elementary schools to share their concerns

but also to share our successes, our energy and the proactive way we tackle issues that are relevant in our individual schools.

EPAC is the next step of what school councils are. We are fortunate to be the prototype. Because we have already well established ourselves as school councils, we took it the next step further. We are a group of parents who know that if we talk to each other and we solve problems, the more communicating we do among ourselves the more successful we are.

We host guest speakers, teachers talking about curriculum. We try to educate our parents on the issues that are important in education today. We are an information network for any private concerns among parents. The board also uses us as a vehicle to get messages and information out to parents.

We're not just about bankrolling projects for our schools, though. We have a much larger role, involving curriculum and standards, and we are thirsty for that information and those issues to come to parents in a format that parents may have found frightening or threatening in the more traditional setup.

We are the link between the parents and the board, and we have a role. We've been valued. We're a valuable resource with the purest agenda, and that's our children.

The Chair: You have quite a brief here, and it's most interesting, but you only have a couple of minutes left. I just wanted to remind you of that.

Mrs Warren: We're not going to read the whole thing.

1340

Mrs Catherine Tobin: The following are the issues we at EPAC support pertaining to Bill 104:

Accountability and community involvement in the education system.

The entrenchment of the school councils.

Annual reports allowing parents to monitor and evaluate the performance of local school boards.

We are pleased to note that constitutional rights will be protected and that parents will still be offered a choice of either public, Catholic, French or English education for their children.

We are delighted that parents will have more input on major decisions affecting their children's education, such as programs the school will offer, ways of reporting student academic progress and student discipline. We are disappointed, however, that a voice in the selection of the principal and support staff was not included in the examples given in Bill 104. We hope this was merely an oversight.

We support clear and constant standards for what students should be learning and for when and how the learning is funded.

We applaud the government for its decision to publish its own report card and allow the public and parents to grade its efforts.

We too believe it is essential that all children across the province receive the highest quality education. This bill must ensure that a more equitable way of funding our schools becomes a reality as a crucial first step in reaching our goals.

We will have concerns related to the amalgamation of our local school boards, the reduction of trustees and the future of support staff, and we will be ever vigilant about the preservation of Catholic education. We support Dave Cooke as co-chair of the EIC. We understand the enormity and necessity of the task which lies ahead of the EIC, and we heartily support its objectives.

The Chair: I'm afraid you've gone beyond your time. It's a most interesting presentation but time really goes quickly. We thank you very much for being here. I assure you that the full text will form part of the record of the committee.

ONTARIO ENGLISH CATHOLIC
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION,
ESSEX ELEMENTARY UNIT

The Chair: The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, Essex Elementary Unit: Mr Dupuis. We are delighted to have you here today. You have 15 minutes for your presentation.

Mr Bernie Dupuis: My name is Bernie Dupuis, president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association. The Essex elementary unit is comprised of 400-plus teachers who have chosen as a career to teach in the Essex County Roman Catholic Separate School Board. Thanks for allowing me to make our presentation today. I hope you have a copy of the brief I've provided.

I won't read the introduction in the brief word for word, but I want to make some comments on the various statements I've made. We spent an awful lot of time in 1993 with Tom Wells. He allowed tremendous input. He spent three months in the Essex-Windsor area. He did a cost-benefit study. I've heard today the recommendations he made — which all of you seem to be aware of — that at best there will be no cost savings; at worst there will be increased costs if there is an amalgamation.

When Mr Snobelen said that trustees seem to be the problem in costs out of control, Mr Wells took an opposite view. He stated in his report that Windsor and Essex separate school board trustees are very frugal.

I've been in the system 34 years. I've had four daughters go through the separate school system in Windsor and Essex. I now have seven grandkids going through the separate school system in Oxford, London, Middlesex, Windsor and Essex. I would expect them to have the same opportunities I've had, which is to have a school system that's democratic and constitutional. I would expect them to have what Mr Wells said, representative democracy, representative trustees who are accountable to the taxpayer.

I've yet to see any cost-benefit data provided by the Ministry of Education to counter Mr Wells's report. Until such time, it's very difficult to study any opposite view, other than the statements of the minister, without any data provided.

If you would give us your cost-benefit data, then maybe we could study it, maybe we could look at it. Mr Wells gave us at least three months for one school board amalgamation. We had ample meetings. We met with him on three occasions just as federations to take care of the concerns. None of that is provided in Bill 104, the way I read it.

In section 1.05 I make a statement about the greater context we need to study Bill 104, since I believe this government has another agenda that is not specifically stated in Bill 104, and until that greater context is known it really needs to be at minimum postponed, although OECTA Essex elementary agrees with Tom Wells that the amalgamation of Windsor and Essex separate school boards should not occur. There seems to be no data that suggest it should.

In section 2.01 I term the new definition for "democracy." Being in the business for 34 years, we've certainly had some major difficulties in discussions with our trustees, but I have the utmost respect for each individual who serves as a trustee for the time, energy and expertise they offer to representing the parents and the community in their job.

To put them in a position where they have no power, to put them in a position where they're blamed for the costs that are seen to be outlandish, is uncalled for. To make a correction by making it undemocratic is just not the Ontario way. So I'm urging you that if you're going to look at changes you certainly must maintain democracy, and not provide democracy in its new definition where the person who's in charge is picked by the minister and the persons who are elected have no power, no representation and no accountability.

The community needs and priorities will not be addressed by any democratically elected and accountable body under Bill 104: The previous speakers — I know most of those individuals. I worked with the PAC. We have representation on the Essex county PAC and there's no question that the parents in my own individual school have done wonders in providing the various slide pictures you've noticed.

The one thing that maybe should have been mentioned in our presentation is that the trustees are the ones who allowed the JK program to exist, for the JK equipment to be put there. Those are the local needs that were addressed by our trustees. They listen to the community. That will not happen after Bill 104. All that equipment can go for naught, all that stuff in the library can go for naught, if no one will be accountable to make the decision on what the local community needs. Presently our trustees work hand in hand with the parents and the teachers to ensure as best they can fiscally to provide for the local needs.

I've listed the recommendations. I hope democracy will reign and the Essex county Roman Catholic school board's autonomy and governance will continue to be recognized as integral components of the democratic system of this province.

I believe we need to make mention of the constitutional rights I have as a separate school ratepayer. I believe Bill 104 in some manner allows someone else, not elected, to make decisions that my minority needs to be made by the duly elected representatives I vote for. I urge you not to touch the constitutional rights and certainly not in a manner that decisions are made by an appointed body and not by the duly represented trustees I would vote for. Bill 104 certainly suggests the opposite.

In the Common Sense Revolution, I didn't think democracy and constitutional matters were issues in the

last election. Bill 104 suggests that democracy and constitutional matters are serious matters that this government is putting on the people of Ontario, and I resent that. I didn't have an opportunity to say no to you, if that was the case.

1350

I have listed three recommendations if you're going to listen to at least postponing Bill 104 until the whole agenda is made known to the community, to the teachers and to the parents, but if not then I've made recommendations that are needed in case Bill 104 goes through. Specifically, I'm talking about successor rights, I'm talking about transfers of teachers, and I've listed them for you to look at. My understanding is none of those have been outlined in Bill 104 or even suggested that there will be an opportunity to discuss them.

Finally, I believe there's a lack of consultation. Bill 104 cannot be taken in a context by itself. Bill 104 has to be taken in the context of the government minister having announced \$1 billion more in cuts in education. We have to talk about Bill 104 in that context. We have to talk about Bill 104 when this government is desperately searching for areas to cut so it can provide its tax break. We have to be knowledgeable of that context. We have to be knowledgeable of the context when the minister promised to create a crisis, to break what is not broken, as his friend, the lawyer from Windsor, stated to us at his hearing.

Bill 104 is taken out of context where it is silent as to successor rights, transfers, rights which are governed by collective agreements. Bill 104 must be taken in the context of the Education Improvement Commission, which has fundamentally taken over control of education with superpowers above the law. Bill 104 must also be taken in the context that the government, I understand, has redefined classrooms, which will facilitate its intended outsourcing.

The Essex county Roman Catholic school board, for your information, outsourced custodial services in 1985. In 1990, the Essex county Roman Catholic school board tabled in negotiations that it would no longer outsource because of the devastation that occurred in all the schools, that the maintenance of the schools was a disaster and there was the cost to put the schools back in order, because of the \$2.50-an-hour and \$3-an-hour jobs that were provided with outsourcing. It just didn't fit. It was not the janitorial union that tabled to stop outsourcing; it was the school board. I hope the minister has that input. I assume he doesn't, but I hope someone will bring it to him.

I have three recommendations. I hope they're taken seriously: to at least postpone Bill 104. If not, I've listed numerous recommendations if Bill 104 is passed, that there are certain guarantees that are needed, as previous speakers have stated.

Finally, I will just go through the conclusion. I'd like to state a couple of paragraphs. The changes proposed by Bill 104, particularly the process of implementation, are unconstitutional to my rights as a separate school taxpayer, and certainly undemocratic since my representative no longer has any power.

Democratic rights, including electing local school trustees who have authority, have been an occurrence since 1843. Constitutional rights for separate school supporters have been an occurrence since 1867.

The entire process of Bill 104 amalgamation must be halted until studies prove that amalgamation is warranted and that it will benefit the students of Ontario. Remember, the Royal Commission on Learning stated that there is no value to amalgamation vis-à-vis education of students. Tom Wells recommended there is no cost savings. Our board could save \$2 million; it would cost us \$10 million to do it. That was in his report. That was stated to us at the meeting with him.

In closing, it is clear that Bill 104 is not about improvement or enhancement of educational opportunities for the children of Ontario, but has everything to do with this government seizing complete financial control of the education system to further reduce expenditures and severely affect the classroom without interference from the local democratically elected representatives of the community.

OECTA Essex will continue to stand up and defend the position that quality, publicly funded education be accessible for every child in every community in Ontario through strong, local, accountable and accessible democratically elected representatives from the community.

Thanks for your time, and if there's time I'll certainly entertain some questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Dupuis. You were right on; I mean in terms of time. As Chair, I'm not allowed to express a view.

Mr Dupuis: I hope you can erase that last line.

The Chair: Thank you very much for being here.

ONTARIO ENGLISH CATHOLIC TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION, ESSEX SECONDARY UNIT

The Chair: May I call upon the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, Essex Secondary Unit. Mr Meloche, welcome. Thank you very much for being here this afternoon.

Mr Rick Meloche: My name is Rick Meloche. I'm president of the OECTA Essex Secondary Unit and I thank you for the opportunity to address you this morning with my many concerns. You have before you, I believe, my brief.

I'd like to start off by saying that I think it's impossible to deal with this Bill 104 in isolation, as many other members and presenters have already stated, because of the other critical issues in education today as we know them: education finance, education governance, and one problem that I see as a very severe problem, secondary school reform.

I'm here this afternoon presenting as a ratepayer, as a parent and as a teacher representative. As a ratepayer, I'm very concerned about the downloading of health and welfare and other services to municipal taxes and taking education off that. It has been stated that there is going to be an increase in cost. We don't know how much. You haven't provided us with that information. The general public, I don't think, is aware of the fact that it's going

to cost them more in their pocketbooks because of what you are doing.

As a parent, I am really happy that my two girls are out of the elementary and secondary systems. I would not want them to have to go through what's going to take place in the next few years. You are going to decimate our system as we know it and I am only thankful that they have already received their education, and a good one.

As a teacher representative, I have several concerns. I will take you through the brief, indicating certain sections that I'd like to highlight. I will leave the majority of my time for my last couple of pages, where I have several questions for you.

On page 1, section 1.02: The Essex Secondary Unit is strongly opposed to the proposed changes, real and especially implied, under Bill 104. We are committed, in rejecting these changes, to maintaining equality of educational opportunity for all.

Sections 1.05, 1.06 and 1.07 I will be dealing with later under "Questions." The same appears for 2.03 and 3.01.

If you turn to page 3, there's a recommendation that I have with respect to my fear that this is going to lead to public education being eliminated and with charter schools coming into play in Ontario. The recommendation is 6.02: That local school board autonomy and governance structures continue to be recognized as integral components of our democratic system and that duly elected school board trustees be permitted to carry out the duties bestowed on them by their office in accordance with the wishes of the electorate.

Very clearly, what I see happening is that by taking the power out of our elected representatives' hands, we will face a situation down the road, probably in four or five years, where this government says: "See: trustees aren't necessary. We don't need school boards." It may just be a concern because I'm cynical. I don't believe so.

On page 5, another recommendation that I have — again, this is coming from me as a teacher representative, as the president of my unit, because I have grave concerns for my teachers — is 9.05, the last one: that all rights which are covered by collective agreements be guaranteed in Bill 104. We don't know right now what will be guaranteed under any bill or legislation that's coming down by this government. We certainly have an idea of what we can look forward to and it's nothing that we are looking forward to, for sure.

On page 9, under my conclusion, 22.02: The future of young learners and teachers in this area can only be negatively affected by these unwarranted sweeping changes. The entire process of amalgamation must be halted until studies prove it is warranted and will benefit the students in our local schools. Previous amalgamations have demonstrated that integration of diverse structures, operating systems, policies and human resources have led to higher costs. Consequently, should this government proceed with Bill 104, it is imperative that a transitional assistance fund be established to meet these increased costs.

I'd like you now to refer to pages 10 and 11. These are questions regarding specific sections of this brief. I'm

going to take you through this, asking these questions. I realize you cannot give me any answers to them right now. I would guess, though, that these questions being asked are many that you've heard before and that you are going to be contemplating in the near future. I'm not sure you have enough time to look at these seriously before this bill gets implemented.

1400

My question with respect to 1.05, and I've prefaced some of these questions with remarks: The Minister of Education in his January 13 speech and news release and in prior and more recent speeches has alluded to innumerable changes to the education system, which in his words is broken and in Mr Paroian's words is broken, and in his words again, "If it's not broken, we'll break it."

There is indeed a crisis in education caused by this government in the hands of this minister. How can we intelligently and seriously discuss Bill 104 and its possible ramifications when so many other critical issues remain unanswered? What will take place with secondary school reform? When is it coming? What will be in it? If it proceeds as anticipated, my next question is, how can secondary schools provide for their students with 25% to 40% less qualified teaching staff in those schools?

Another question that comes up is, what happens to collective agreements? Will there continue to be teacher federations? How will the amalgamation process unfold? Where are the ground rules? When will we find out how we are going to be amalgamated if in fact we are? After the fact or when we have no input? Do we pass Bill 104 before we have these questions answered? I think not.

1.06: In Thomas Wells's report he concluded for many reasons that the process would be more costly than the present system and would not be educationally advantageous. If this was the case in 1993, what has changed? If this government is not planning on gutting the educational system, how can amalgamation be such a cost-saving measure?

Here's a local concern, a very big one, in 1.07 and 13.01: There are several areas in which the Essex County Roman Catholic Separate School Board and the Windsor Roman Catholic Separate School Board programs differ. Junior kindergarten, senior kindergarten, instrumental music, industrial arts, French immersion and special education are but a few. There is also a very real situation where the boards have different personnel as support staff: coordinators, consultants, speech pathologists. Can this government guarantee that the delivery of these services will not change for the worse? How can this proposed amalgamation be anything more than a race to the bottom?

I want you all to keep something in mind, because we teachers are looked at as a special interest group: Teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions. If you have happy teachers, you have happy students. Right now you have teachers who are feeling demoralized to the point where they don't know if they're coming or going, and this is before Bill 104 gets passed. Can you imagine how they are going to feel after it gets passed?

Page 11, 2.03: How can this government create an Education Improvement Commission with such dictatorial

power that its decisions are binding and cannot be reviewed or questioned by a court? Is this another example of the democratic process illustrated by this government? How could members be appointed to this commission before Bill 104 is passed? Do these appointments suggest that these hearings are a sham and that this government is once again using a supposed consultation process to create the illusion that meaningful dialogue took place?

If the local school boards and the elected trustees have little or no autonomy or decision-making power, what is their purpose? Is this not part of the government's grand plan to eliminate school boards?

Bill 104 does not guarantee that the new local district board will assume the liabilities of the existing Essex and Windsor boards. What will happen to collective agreements? What will happen to grievances? Will they be dismissed out of hand? If so, is this democracy? Where is the justice for my members whose rights have been violated? Perhaps you will handle that really well when your legislation comes down. I don't think so.

This government puts on the appearance of concern that the classroom not be affected by the proposed changes to education. Does this government not realize that all teachers, including guidance counsellors, librarians, special education, music and art teachers contribute to the education of our students? Should educators not decide which services are instructional or non-instructional?

How can outsourcing support staff not adversely affect the classroom? I'm in a high school every day. It cannot be run efficiently without our secretaries, without our pupil assistants, without our pupil aides, without our teacher assistants. It cannot function without them. You seem to think we can outsource these people and privatize, bring someone in to do the job. It will not happen. For health and safety reasons, our custodians care about what goes on in our schools. Their kids are our students. What will happen when a fly-by-night company comes in from 2 in the morning until 4 in the morning to clean the schools? How will that affect the cleanliness in the schools?

Last, how can the level of communication between the board, trustees, parents, students and teachers not be negatively affected by this amalgamation? With greater distances to travel, it will be bad enough in Windsor and Essex county. Imagine up north where it's going to take someone eight hours to travel from one jurisdiction to the next to try to meet. Are you going to provide them with lodging?

I have very many concerns, as do my teachers, and we don't have any answers. I certainly hope that before Bill 104 gets passed, you can provide us with answers so that we will not be demoralized any more than we already are at this point. Thank you.

Mr Skarica: There are a lot of concerns that you raise and I only have a minute. In fact there's a francophone board in Ottawa that we heard from that has done outsourcing. It's allowed them to do many things, including increasing the number of teachers in the classroom, putting additional funds into computers, maintaining their kindergarten program, not raising taxes

and so on and so forth. I just mention that, that it depends on the circumstances. There are circumstances where outsourcing can benefit the classroom and there are other circumstances, I recognize, where it cannot. In fact Mr Cooke has recognized that.

Mr Meloche: If I may in brief comment, I think the outsourcing perhaps will be a cost-saving venture but it will do nothing for the educational purpose of our students.

1410

Mr Crozier: Good afternoon, Rick, and welcome. With reference to your point 10.02 on the last page, the minister has time and time again given what I think are absurd examples of costs that are outside the classroom, and they're significant. For example, transporting students to school has nothing to do with getting students in the classroom; clean halls have nothing to do with getting students into the school in a clean environment; libraries have nothing to do with classroom instruction. You've made some comment relative to that and I just wondered if you'd like to expand on that, how this debate goes on. I think it's a smoke-screen debate.

Mr Meloche: Exactly. I think what we have to understand is that when we're looking at education of our students, whether it be elementary or secondary, we have to look at all the pieces of the puzzle. Who in fact is educating our students? Is it just the classroom teacher? I think not. I can't function as a classroom teacher without the support staff, without guidance people helping me along. We have to have those resources. Without them the students are being shafted, and this government is about to shaft our students.

Mrs Boyd: Thank you very much for your presentation, Rick. Could you give us an idea what education programs currently existing in Essex county are likely to get lost as a result of Bill 104?

Mr Meloche: We have the special ed program and it has been acclaimed by many groups as being one of the finest in the province. It is a costly program. Unfortunately, I don't believe that program will be able to be maintained with the government cuts. They cannot take \$1 billion out of education and keep all of the programs that we have as viable programs and keep all the programs that Windsor has as viable programs and expect them to operate within that cost-cutting venture. It will not happen.

Mrs Boyd: So the children will suffer.

Mr Meloche: Yes, they certainly will.

The Vice-Chair (Mr Dwight Duncan): I'm sorry, Ms Boyd, your time is up. Thank you, Mr Meloche.

WINDSOR-ESSEX PUBLIC SERVICE COALITION

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the Windsor-Essex Public Service Coalition: Bernie Dupuis, treasurer, and Scott Hunt, chair.

Mr Scott Hunt: My name is Scott Hunt. I represent the Windsor-Essex Public Service Coalition. We represent the five teacher affiliates, as well as CUPE, OPSEU and the Service Employees International Union. We were formed because we were concerned about the future of

education. We are still concerned, so therefore we are still being very involved.

I hope my comments will be brief enough that there will be questions, because I think dialogue is important in this whole process.

I believe there is a conspiracy going on in this province, and the purpose of the conspiracy is to destroy public services in favour of a privatized system. I must compliment the government, however, on the strategies it's been using to achieve its purpose. They certainly have been effective, but it's now time to expose them.

You first portray spending on public services as out of control and commence further cuts, and that's what's happened. In fact, debt-servicing costs have been the real reason for increased spending. John Snobelen keeps fabricating his story by indicating that we are massively overspending on education. In fact, in 1993 we were 29th out of 63 jurisdictions on the continent and now we are 46th. As well, in 1996 Ontario spent \$165 above the Canadian average and \$277 above the average of the other provinces on education. This level of expenditure is entirely justified given the cost of living in Ontario and the nature of our population.

John Snobelen also says that 80 cents out of every dollar is spent outside the classroom. According to the Ministry of Education's own statistics, in 1994, 50.8% of education dollars were spent on teachers' salaries. I am sure everyone here has heard the expression, "You don't get something for nothing," but John Snobelen says, "By making these reforms we are going to improve the quality at less cost to the taxpayer." While spending a lot does not guarantee good public services, spending too little does guarantee poor public services.

Another insidious tactic is to deny the existence of any power while at the same time to work quietly to shape people's beliefs. The Premier tells us about the need for less government while at the same time John Snobelen paints the school system as broken, unaccountable, bloated with bureaucracy, wasteful of property tax dollars and in need of Queen's Park to step in and rescue the poor property owner. In fact, school boards have had to raise more money from taxes as they are getting less help from the Ontario government.

Bill 104, as part of this tactic, reduces the status of democratically elected officials while the Education Improvement Commission has tremendous power which may not be challenged by the electorate nor by existing boards or the employees who will be directly affected by its decisions. This bill strips away the democratic right of board employees and their spouses to offer themselves as candidates for school boards.

What this bill is about is the government being hell bent on finding money it needs to pay for its tax cut.

What this bill is about is the privatization of education in this province. John Snobelen wants to eliminate school boards and substitute for them parent councils that will have the power to establish a two-tiered system of education based on charter schools.

I am left with a series of questions about this bill:

Are district school boards school boards within the meaning of the School Boards and Teachers Collective Negotiations Act?

Do the new district school boards have to honour existing collective agreements?

Who is going to pay for the \$2.8 billion in non-instructional board costs?

Is the government's objective to privatize 36,000 CUPE jobs?

Does John Snobelen want to take us back a century to a time when students had to walk because there were no buses; to a one-room schoolhouse with no principal; where they wore coats all day — no heat; where they took turns sweeping up — no custodians?

The people of this province care about democracy. They want elected trustees who are accessible and accountable for what happens to their children in their classrooms. Egerton Ryerson, the founder of public education, said that the education of young people had special status in society and deserved an independent governance and funding structure to ensure that all students have access to a free public education. The government wants to destroy that founding principle. We, however, are committed to the destruction of Bill 104. We are committed to maintaining equality of educational opportunity for all. We are committed to the full-service school which includes all those services that this government wants to outsource.

Mrs McLeod: We know, as you've noted, that the government, through both the Premier and the Minister of Education, has indicated it needs \$1 billion in order to fund the tax cut. They've said that publicly.

We also know that last November and December we were expecting the Minister of Finance to make financial statements to the Legislature. They decided not to and the next thing we had was Bill 104 and the announcement that the government was going to take over educational funding. You've noted that you believe that taking over educational funding is a way of making that cut. I'd like to ask you then, if the government's goal is to take more money out of education, what does that do to classrooms and to students in a classroom?

Second, if I may, the government says this is about equitable funding. What does equitable funding mean if at the end of the day there's going to be less money for every student?

Mr Hunt: In answer to your first question, since I am a classroom teacher and I've already felt the cuts in my own classroom because I teach a destreamed grade 9 class — if everyone will remember back when destreaming was introduced, the concept was that we were going to help those students at the lower end of the academic scale to achieve better in high school by creating a homogeneous classroom in grade 9 where those students would have an opportunity to work with other students, and we were going to create class sizes of approximately 25 so those students would be able to get more individual help from the teacher etc.

Of course, now I'm faced with the fact that all three classes in grade 9 have 33 students in them and there's no homogeneous nature at all in that classroom. Therefore, those students are facing the situation where they just are not going to get help. The weaker students in that classroom are not going to get the same education.

Incidentally, we also don't have enough textbooks, another problem.

In response to the second question — I'm sorry, Mrs McLeod, what was —

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Mrs McLeod: The whole idea that this is going to provide equitable funding, and what is that going to mean.

Mr Hunt: Unfortunately, I don't think it can provide equitable funding, because equitable funding means that you spend money to provide resources for every student in this province, and that's not their agenda. Their agenda is to privatize; their agenda is to take money out and use it for a tax cut. If we were serious about this, about reform — I mean all of us — it would have been consultation and discussion with the people in the classroom, but there was none. Therefore we're left with this situation of having to fight back against this campaign, and we will continue.

Mr Wildman: Thank you for your presentation. You mention lack of resources, not enough textbooks. It's widespread across the province. But I'd like to hone in on one quote you made of Mr Paroian, who was appointed by Mr Snobelen to study collective bargaining in the education system. He is widely quoted as having said during those hearings, "If it ain't broke, we'll break it," as you said. How do you interpret that? What does that mean to you as someone who's going to be affected by the recommendations he made? What does it mean for education?

Mr Hunt: I think it means for education that he's going to create a crisis by suggesting that there are problems in the system. He comes out with the statements about our students and therefore suggests that we have to change the system, we've got to make it more accountable. My problem with this whole process is that it's not going to be achieved that way. That is not the way you improve the system, although I know that he also said that improvement is the enemy of change, so therefore obviously he doesn't want to improve.

Mr Wildman: He said you can improve to death.

Mr Hunt: Yes. Therefore improvement is not the goal. What we need is real dialogue, which we could have. I know that takes time, but of course they don't have time because they've got to get that 30% tax cut.

Mr Carroll: Thank you very much. Good to see you again.

Mr Hunt: Good to see you, Jack.

Mr Carroll: We've had several interesting discussions. Glad to see you haven't given up on any of those.

Mr Hunt: I won't.

Mr Carroll: One of the things that you talk about at length in your presentation that you're committed to is maintaining equality of educational opportunity for all students, a very lofty idea and one that we certainly share with you. In keeping with that particular commitment, could you explain to me how the variation in per pupil spending by the four school boards in and around Windsor and Essex county, the variation of \$1,000, which is 20%, is in keeping with equality of educational opportunity for all?

Mr Hunt: Jack, in terms of the school boards, I would not know enough about their individual budgets. I know this is what John Snobelen says, that he's going to take it out of the administration and put it in the classroom. The problem is this: In terms of those four school boards, I don't think any one of them is spending exorbitantly outside the classroom. There may be individual differences, I presume based on the programs they're providing. That's why each individual board has different expenses: because of the programs.

Mr Carroll: But you talk about equal opportunity for all, though.

Mr Hunt: Yes. In my system, which is the public secondary system in the county, if we have students who have special needs, then obviously we have to provide those services for those students and therefore we have to spend more money. When we talk about equality of educational opportunity, you have to look at each board individually, and you certainly can't make decisions in Toronto. How can somebody in Toronto make a decision for a student in Essex county?

Mr Carroll: Is there a possibility that there is some inefficiency in some of these boards, that we can take the money and spend it in the classroom? Is there a possibility of that?

Mr Hunt: If we assume, Jack, that that is a given, let's assume that you are right, the problem is this: That isn't what you're about, that isn't what the government's agenda is about. The government's agenda is not about improving the system. The government's agenda is totally different. If you wanted to improve, then you'd sit down with those people and talk to them, rather than just arbitrarily imposing Bill 104 on us.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Hunt. We appreciate your coming forward and making your views known to us.

WINDSOR BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: The Windsor Board of Education: John Bentley, Mary Jean Gallagher and Bill Piliotis. Welcome to our committee and thank you for being here.

Mr John Bentley: On behalf of the Board of Education for the City of Windsor, I wish to thank you for this opportunity to share our views with respect to Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act.

We recognize that this bill is the first of several pieces of legislation which will be proposed as the government moves forward with its plans to restructure and redirect education in our province. The governance changes included in Bill 104 are but one piece of the puzzle, as we see it. Ultimately the success or failure of the new system depends on the combination of all the pieces that are yet to come with respect to this educational restructuring: the funding model; final decisions on the rearrangement of fiscal responsibilities among school boards, municipal governments and the province; and any future negotiations processes and revisions. Because the rest of the puzzle is yet unknown, it is particularly difficult to predict the effects of this one piece of legislation and to respond with any degree of precision as to its impact on our community.

At the outset, let me state that the number of school boards in and of itself is not an issue with the Windsor Board of Education. As a board, we have been formally in support of the consideration of amalgamation as a means to more effectively focus resources in support of student learning since March 1991, when our board adopted the following resolution:

"That the Windsor Board of Education investigate the concept of amalgamation with the Essex county public school board and notify the Ministry of Education and the Essex county board of this intention."

Historically, we have also been in support of the need to reduce the number of trustees, to find ways to ensure public representation in our education system is not only effective but also fiscally efficient. In the first year in which boards were allowed to increase the number of trustees, we reduced our board from 15 to 13. We have since reduced that number to 10 in an effort to achieve greater efficiencies in governance, as we have with every other area of our board's operations. We do, however, have some concerns regarding the adequacy of this Bill 104's proposal that as few as five trustees represent some boards of education in our province. Certainly numbers are important, and the critical number has to be somewhat more than what I think is being suggested in the legislation to date.

This reduced level of local representation appears to be part of an overall plan to move funding of our education system away from local sources and decision-making to the provincial centre. Our board is greatly concerned with the potential implications of this on our community. At issue here is the ability of a more centralized system to consider and respond to the differences in local needs for critical services, services which not only determine the quality of life in a community but also services which directly impact upon our ability to build a competitive and healthy local economy.

The city of Windsor differs a great deal from the county. As a city, we experience double the amount of immigration numbers as our neighbours. Studies have indicated that we have three times the proportion of population living in poverty than our surrounding area. In this area we exceed the province by 50%. We have a higher proportion of mothers with lower reading levels. The recognition of our unusually high incidence of low-birth-weight babies has led our provincial government to fund special programs like the Sandwich Community Health Centre in our city.

Almost one third of our elementary schools are designated "compensatory," meaning the combination of families on social assistance, lower-income neighbourhoods, single-parent families and lower reading levels of students is significant enough to warrant special staffing and budget provisions. Finally, our proximity to a major American city with its many inner-city problems creates a significant spillover effect. Our community experiences more urban problems than its own population would normally predict. Our economy for decades has followed a boom and bust cycle. All of these factors create very special educational needs, different from most other communities in this province.

For example, our community demands and needs junior kindergarten in all of our schools. We have an expanded arts magnet program which is designed to provide opportunities for artistically talented young people who may not have had the experiences of private arts instruction. An extended and heavily subscribed range of special education services is provided in our system. We have an expanded adult and continuing education program and a higher demand for specific work preparation and career training programs, such as our manufacturing technology apprenticeship program and hospitality services and chef training programs.

These programs were not determined by the whims of elected officials. These programs were articulated by the community at large, and what they demanded we provide our students. As a board, we responded to that articulation by making sure in our budget deliberations that we were able to allocate sufficient funds to maintain these programs and to continue them to date.

The program needs, as determined by the community, have formed the basic premise for our boards's budget deliberations over the past few years. We have in fact completed a major restructuring of central administration and services as well as a reduction in the number of our school facilities in order to be able to maintain our programs in these and other critical areas. We have significantly reduced our overall budget in the last two years. This has been accomplished while absorbing the costs of new provincial initiatives, including pay equity, changes in workers' compensation, class-size changes as it relates to the primary division, and the costly impact of the reduced enrolment and a reduced assessment base occasioned by the extension of funding to separate schools.

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The age and experience levels of our secondary teaching staff is still among the highest in the province, a significant salary cost which is not currently accommodated in any special grants that we receive. Our board has functioned well in its budget and planning decisions, very carefully balancing the educational needs of our community with taxpayer willingness to financially support those needs.

Bill 104 represents the beginning of an increased distance or separation between those who deliver the programs and services and those who will decide how those programs and services are funded. On behalf of our community this is a very grave concern. In fact, it is the opposite of disentanglement, the notion that those whose interest is in the service should pay for it. We are seeking some assurance that local needs will continue to be adequately met in Ontario's new education system, and by needs being met we are specifically referring to adequate funding to provide for all the programs that our community deems necessary for our students.

On behalf of our board, I wish to state that our commitment, within the scope of Bill 104, is to work to make our amalgamation with the Essex County Board of Education a successful change for our community. Our goal is to use this time of change to create a new board of education in Windsor-Essex which will combine the best practices from both boards with other best practices

and approaches in order to continue to provide high-quality educational services to our students and citizens.

We intend specifically to build upon our board's growing record of partnerships and service initiatives. This record of partnerships includes the following:

We're making our newest school, Brock, a partnership endeavour among a school, a library, a police station and a child care community centre. In one of our schools we have located a community health centre. We have entered into successful agreements with our board, the ministry and our coterminous board, which has resulted in school transfers which have benefited all citizens in this community. We are currently in joint purchasing ventures with the city, the university, St Clair College and other area school boards, and we are currently negotiating a joint transportation policy with the Windsor separate school board. Hopefully that will be on stream later this year.

In whatever form the district boards of education take, and specifically in the workings of the Education Improvement Commission as proposed in this bill, we would seek some processes which will continue to support the ability of boards to take advantage of existing savings from shared-service initiatives between coterminous boards and other agencies, as well as processes which would provide ongoing incentives for new and more effective sharing arrangements.

With respect to the Education Improvement Commission, we do have certain concerns. We believe that the financial control provisions in that bill are so detailed as to run the risk of becoming non-viable. To expect boards to provide the number of reports required and the level of detail involved would suggest the commission is expected to micromanage the province and certainly represents a considerable workload for local boards. We believe this area of the bill should provide the Education Improvement Commission with the flexibility to ask for these reports, but to expect this volume of tracking to be done in every board every month may well present an obstacle to successful merger planning.

In addition, as elected trustees responsible to our ratepayers, we wish to express our concerns regarding the authority and the lack of accountability to the taxpayers of the commission members. Education was the very first local responsibility given to communities in Ontario in the Assessment Act of 1793 and later pieces of legislation.

I wish to comment as well on two other areas in the Education Improvement Commission's responsibility within Bill 104: first, the role of school advisory councils, and second, the outsourcing of services.

With regard to the role of school advisory councils, we wish this committee to know that we strongly support the need for increased parental involvement in our schools. Research is clear that one of the strongest factors affecting a student's success in school is the support and involvement of their parents.

Parental involvement in governance, however, is only one component of this. In our board, school advisory councils have successfully been launched in all our schools. A committee of parents and principals work together to plan training and information sessions for our school advisory council chairs and principals.

At the moment there are a number of mixed messages being sent regarding the role of school advisory councils and also the role of trustees. These messages about governance must be clarified if Ontario's education system is going to maintain consistency across the province.

The successful functioning of our schools will not be enhanced if school councils and trustees do not have a clear understanding of their respective roles. If trustees are to have an ability to concentrate on their role and objectives of being guardians of public education, they must continue to have real authority to make decisions which matter, decisions about programs and resources which affect the factors contributing to successful student learning. Many of these decisions cannot appropriately or consistently be made on a school-by-school basis.

We also wish to express some concerns about the issue of outsourcing of educational services. Our staff, in almost every level and role, act as guardians for our children. We expect them to be alert to strangers in our buildings and to individual students' needs, sometimes in dealing with even their own family circumstances. On occasion, students will share this information with a custodian or a support staff person more readily than with a teacher.

We have very deep concerns that any outsourcing processes may attend to the financial bottom line at the expense of the important, consistent extra roles and access to children many of our staff currently have. Decisions about services in our schools are very different from the decisions municipalities normally make about the provision of other community services.

Finally, one of the most glaring omissions in this bill is any reference to the principles which will guide the human resources implications of these changes. Our board believes strongly that our staff should be involved in the identification of processes to handle any staff restructuring.

In addition, it is important that the bill include commitment to making these changes in a fair and humane manner, a manner which recognizes the excellence and caring of our many staff who currently dedicate their life and work to our students. Presently, there is considerable anxiety among staff of boards of education because they do not know what their status is going to be come January 1, 1998.

Currently, as I understand it, Bill 103 provides for the transfer of staff from the existing municipalities to the new entity. We believe strongly that a similar provision should be incorporated in Bill 104 to formally recognize the transfer of employees of the existing school boards to the new district board.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank you for your kind attention, and while we support in general the governance intentions of this bill as they relate to Windsor and Essex counties, we do have serious reservations about the processes implied and what we expect will be happening in the very near future.

The Chair: Chairman Bentley, thank you very much, along with your colleagues, for being here. You've used up all your time. We thank you for your very thoughtful presentation.

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CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES, LOCAL 1348

The Chair: CUPE Local 1348: Rose Gunnell. Thank you very much for being here. Welcome to our committee.

Mrs Rose Gunnell: Good afternoon. My name is Rose Gunnell. I'm a wife, a mother of three teenage sons, and a taxpayer. I'm president of CUPE Local 1348, the Essex County Board of Education, and an area representative to CUPE's Ontario educational institutes coordinating committee, and I'm concerned. This presentation is on behalf of all CUPE educational workers, who are also taxpayers and concerned.

In July 1995 Mr Snobelen publicly stated his intention to "invent a crisis" in Ontario's education system, a crisis that would justify the kind of radical reforms his government wanted to make. Not surprisingly, our schools have come under a constant barrage of criticism ever since. The charges, each one disputable: Education spending is out of control; too much money is being spent outside the classroom; our students are graduating without a good education; teachers are overpaid and have too much control over education.

If Bill 104 is passed, the government will begin to exert a new control over Ontario's education system, starting with the establishment of the undemocratic Education Improvement Commission.

Bill 104 is the government's first big step down the road of privatizing Ontario's schools. First, non-instructional services will be outsourced. Next, no doubt, will come the handing over of construction and maintenance of schools to the private sector, then charter schools, and finally, privatization of curriculum and even teaching, as exists south of the border.

CUPE does not believe that our public education system is broken. At least it is not broken yet. It will be if this government gets its way. In fact, we wonder if that might just be the agenda: break the system, then use the public dissatisfaction that is created to build public support for a private system.

This presentation will focus on the issues in Bill 104 that most directly touch the lives of the 1,000 CUPE workers who work in the Windsor, Essex county and Kent county education systems.

Who are the non-instructional workers in the education system? CUPE members work in all occupations in the education sector. CUPE members are educational assistants, caretakers, maintenance and tradespeople, clerical workers, audiovisual counsellors, clerks, accounting personnel, computer programmers, technicians, library technicians and purchasing officers.

All of these occupations are an important part of the quality of the education delivered in the classroom, yet school support workers tend to receive a very modest rate of pay for the important work we do. The average wage is \$24,000 per year.

The school caretaker is the first person in the school in the morning and last one out at night. They keep the school clean and safe. They change fluorescent lights and ballasts, check the water supply and fix flush valves; fix

broken desks and equipment to save the school money; paint, wash furniture, clean walls, wash and wax floors, clean carpets and windows; shovel sidewalks and playground areas to make them safe for everyone; meet the needs of community groups; know who's in the school at night; know and look after the students, whether it is the lost mitten of a grade 1 student or the lost locker key of a grade 12.

The school secretary is the link between the school and the rest of the world. He or she deals with children, parents, community, school staff, board staff and outside companies; is the school communications centre; helps sick children; keeps track of report cards and other records in a professional and confidential manner; calls home when a student doesn't show up to make sure everything is okay.

The educational assistant is not a teacher but is in the classroom with specialized skills. They have programming and training on specialized computer programs; sign language, Braille, PIC symbols, physiotherapy and occupational therapy. They take yard duty; administer medication; modify and deliver programs; and integrate.

Bill 104 is an attack on the jobs in our communities. The Education Improvement Commission will be mandated to recommend to the government how to, not whether to, outsource all non-instructional services in our systems.

It would appear that the privatization of decent jobs is based on the government's constant contention that too much money is being spent outside the classroom on services like caretaking, maintenance and school administrative services. Are the many services available in today's system worth the extra costs? Of course they are.

We have a world-class education system, as was attested to when the Durham Board of Education and Sinclair Secondary School were awarded the prestigious Bertelsmann prize for excellence in education last fall. These are not the only world-class boards of education in our province. Our systems are world class because they are public and have developed good processes of governance and accountability.

If the government is not suggesting we can do without these important services in our schools, what they must be saying is that employees should just do these jobs for lower wages and worse working conditions. This is an unacceptable job strategy by everyone's standards.

The average CUPE school board worker supports a family on less than \$24,000 a year. CUPE members believe our education system, and their jobs, are worth defending.

Bill 104 is an attack on the services. What about the quality of non-instructional services? Does it matter if a private company cleans the school, maintains and repairs the plumbing and the furnace, handles student reports, staffs the school and board offices, integrates students, modifies their programs, interprets for the blind or deaf? In CUPE's experience, it very much does.

Our students deserve the best possible environment in which to learn. In fact, studies have shown that students do better in clean, comfortable learning environments. They also deserve reliable, well-trained and well-treated staff in their schools.

CUPE's experience with privatization in the education, health care and municipal sectors shows that service invariably suffers. Buildings are not as clean. Lower-paid and insecure staff have a higher turnover. Sometimes contractors go out of business, leaving the public to pick up the tab. Ironically, it can often cost more, not less, to contract out public services. Time and again, we have seen that privatization is done only for ideological reasons, not because it provides better service and not because it costs less.

Bill 104 is an attack on our communities. When the Harris government attacks jobs, it attacks communities too. Yes, there will be private sector jobs in the schools if private companies take over non-instructional services. But the need to make a profit will dictate that there will be fewer jobs provided. They will pay less and they will not provide the benefits and fair working conditions that inspire loyalty and consistency in staff.

Taking money out of the pockets of workers takes money out of local economies around the province. Consumer confidence is already low. If Bill 104 is passed, landlords will find usually reliable tenants suddenly not able to pay their rent. Banks will have former school board employees defaulting on mortgages and local retailers will see business fall.

Such an economic strategy is simply unacceptable, especially in a province where the real unemployment rate of November 1996 — it was CUPE research that included discouraged workers — stands at 14.2%.

Privatization will not only take money out of local economies. Currently, large American-based companies are in the best position to profit from the sudden and massive privatization of non-instructional services in our schools. Contracts with these companies will siphon taxpayers' money out of the local economy, the region and even the country.

Bill 104 is an attack on democratic institutions. CUPE's very concerned about the establishment of the Education Improvement Commission. It seems that the government is unwilling to take full responsibility for the changes it is about to unleash on our schools. Instead, an unelected and unaccountable body will take over what should be the responsibility of the elected politicians at both the provincial and local levels.

The North American free trade agreement, NAFTA, and current negotiations on the agreement on internal trade, AIT, also present serious considerations that must be taken into account. Provisions in NAFTA make it virtually impossible for services that have been privatized to be taken back into the public service, whether or not privatization works out. Once the AIT is expanded to include the local government sectors, there is reason to believe that these provisions will also apply to school boards. If total privatization of non-instructional services were not to work out, therefore boards could only take this work back in-house if the companies involved were financially compensated for all lost business now and in the future. Obviously, the cost of taking the work back into the public sector would be prohibitive.

When there are cuts, it's not the workers who are responsible. It's not the parents who are responsible. They pay their taxes. It's elected politicians who prom-

ised not to cut education. Our children are not responsible for cutbacks, yet they seem to be the ones who are going to suffer.

Will Bill 104 "improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system" as it promises? No, nor is that the government's obvious intent. Bill 104 is designed to start privatizing large portions of the education system, while giving the provincial government the control it needs to continue on that path, whether through charter school legislation or the sale of schools to the private sector.

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CUPE members will not stand by while their jobs are being eliminated. They will fight to maintain the high-quality services they provide and to defend the wellbeing of the communities they live in.

Our recommendations:

Reaffirm the need for the public delivery of education, acknowledging that a public system is more efficient and more equitable.

Defeat Bill 104 and engage in true consultation with stakeholders.

If meaningful consultation with stakeholders still results in school board amalgamations, establish a process that protects jobs. Put fair workforce adjustment programs in place, and protect the public delivery of all aspects of the system.

Return accountability to the hands of elected representatives — the MPPs and trustees — not the unelected and unaccountable Education Improvement Commission and education improvement committees.

Ensure that elected boards of education are stronger, not weaker; more accountable, not less accountable.

Invest more, not less, in our public education system.

In conclusion — and maybe this will clear up your explanation, in what I perceive as spending in the classroom. As I mentioned at the beginning, I am a taxpayer and parent, a parent of a learning-disabled, visually impaired son with asthma. Jon will be 20 next week. Fifteen years ago, you could say I put Jon on a bike and sent him on his way to ride through his education. His wheel started to turn and at first it turned slowly, but then he had a special education teacher who helped him turn that wheel. He had many special education teachers.

Along the way the caretaker provided him with a clean, secure and safe environment to learn — more than one caretaker. He had efficient, calm, cool, dependable secretaries who on numerous occasions had to call mom — more than one secretary and clerical support staff. Jon also had the professional, qualified services of an educational assistant who was not only comforting during the difficult times but firm and invaluable in the services they gave Jon in assisting with his daily routines, such as ensuring large print and organizing — and there was more than one educational assistant that touched his learning life.

You see, he went to five schools throughout his education, not because we moved but because he went to the schools that could provide him the best education possible.

But Jon's bike had two wheels, and along the way he had many principals, vice-principals, counsellors, speech

teachers. All would become spokes to his wheels to keep them turning smoothly. He never fell off, he had all his spokes, and his bike was never broken. How can you strip away the essential services of clerical, caretaker and educational assistants, to name a few? Spending educational dollars was in the classroom, not outside the classroom. That is where Jon was, in the classroom, and he needed every service to be a part of his education and the spokes of his wheels.

The next learning-disabled student won't have the wheels. He won't be a 20-year-old attending college, reading and confident in himself if you pass Bill 104. Think about that.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs Gunnell. You've used up all your time, very effectively I might say. I thank you on behalf of the committee.

Mr Wildman?

Mr Wildman: Chair, the parliamentary assistant isn't here. I want to table a document I've just received which is on Ministry of Education and Training letterhead. It is directed to all four directors of education in the Windsor-Essex area, both public boards and both separate boards, from Bill Jock, who I understand is the regional supervisor of the Ministry of Education and Training in the Windsor office. I'll read the first page, the covering page, into the record and then I'd like to have an explanation.

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr Wildman. Is this something that you want the parliamentary assistant to respond to?

Mr Wildman: I want the whole committee to be aware of this because it affects directly what we're doing here.

The Chair: Could we have it copied and then have it —

Mr Wildman: Certainly, after I read it into the record. Directed to the directors of education:

"Attached you will find the schedule for Dave Cooke and Ann Vanstone for April 9 in Windsor at 430 Ouellette, Howard Johnson's Plaza, 254-3726.

"The purpose of the meeting is twofold:

"1. To obtain information about what stage boards are at in the implementation process — how far along are they?

"2. To ascertain and clarify concerns and issues which have arisen and/or are likely to emerge as the process continues."

That's in print, and attached is a schedule of meetings with all the players.

Then in handwriting, which I assume to be Mr Jock's — it's his signature — it says:

"Please forward the names of the representatives who will attend the meetings described on the attached page. The deadline for this information is March 26th." Two days from now. The deadline for this information is March 26. "Please fax this information directly to Anne Evanoff at (519) 667-9769 (fax no). Attendance will be confirmed with the boards by Anne via a chart containing representatives' names and meeting times through a return fax to you." Signed Bill Jock.

The deadline here is March 26. We are just having hearings on this legislation. The hearings end tomorrow and then we go to clause-by-clause on March 26, yet we

have a memo from the Ministry of Education and Training which is written in a way to just assume that this legislation is passed as is and the implementation has already started.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Wildman. I'll ask for that to be copied and distributed. I propose that we defer the discussion to just before our break, when Mr Skarica will be here. Is that acceptable to you?

Mr Wildman: That's acceptable. I want to know what this process is about. If we're really here to hear what people have to say about school board amalgamations and to amend the bill in a way that respects what they've had to say, we shouldn't be sending out memos now before the process is even complete.

The Chair: We'll deal with this just before our break.

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION SUPPORT STAFF BARGAINING UNITS, DISTRICT 1, WINDSOR

The Chair: The support staff bargaining units of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. Thank you very much, Mrs Sahli-Scott, for being here. Welcome to our committee.

Mrs Sandra Sahli-Scott: Thank you. As you can see, I've brought Patricia Pajot with us. She's a support worker for the hearing-impaired in the Windsor board and she will sign this presentation.

On behalf of the support staff bargaining units of the Ontario Secondary Schools Teachers' Federation, District 1, Windsor, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to share our views on Bill 104.

The support staff bargaining units include two bargaining units that are employees of the Windsor Board of Education. One unit is office, clerical and technical employees who work in a variety of positions in our elementary, secondary and adult education schools, in our administration building and in our plant department. The other unit is educational associates who are employed to work in a number of special programs in our elementary and secondary schools. This group includes child and youth workers, developmental service workers, early childhood educators, support workers for the hearing-impaired and non-teaching aides for special needs students.

The two bargaining units represent over 250 very dedicated and qualified employees of the Windsor board who every day contribute to the quality education system provided to our students.

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I am a full-time child and youth worker who, in a volunteer capacity, has the honour to represent these two bargaining units as their vice-president and chief negotiator. I am deeply concerned with the attack this government has made on education. I have watched as this government has repeatedly undervalued the work and services provided by educational support staff in Ontario. I have watched my members become demoralized by this government's suggestions that their jobs can be easily outsourced because they are non-essential services. I am appalled at how the government is toying with the job security and future of these fine employees.

I have come here today with what I believe are concrete suggestions on how Bill 104 can be amended to change all this. To date, the educational workers I represent believe that this government has never considered or attempted to address the impact these changes will have on their working lives.

It is essential that the results of these hearings on Bill 104 demonstrate a willingness on the government's part to listen to the concerns of the educational community by making the necessary amendments to this bill. If this is not done, the students and our school communities of Ontario will ultimately be the big losers.

It is essential that the public know that Bill 104 will do more than identify new boundaries for school boards. It will also lead to the complete reorganization of educational governance and finance in Ontario.

It is important that the government is honest with the public and that the public understands that amalgamation is really only one issue addressed in Bill 104. It would appear that the main thrust of this bill is the fundamental takeover of education finance and governance by this government.

I would like to express our concerns and recommendations on three specific areas in Bill 104: the restructuring of school boards and the impact it will have on employee groups, the powers legislated to the Education Improvement Commission, or EIC, and the mandate given to this commission to research and make recommendations on the outsourcing of non-essential services in education.

It is important to compare the difference in approach taken by the former Tory government in 1968, when school boards were last amalgamated with the approach of this government today. In the former case the government included in its legislation the details of how school boards would be merged, including the distribution of assets and liabilities and the protection of school board employees, their existing collective agreements and their bargaining rights.

This government has not provided any details and has shown no forethought or concern for these matters. As a result, the introduction of Bill 104 leaves us with more questions than answers. This has resulted in an underlying fear among those in education that the present government has a hidden agenda to privatize education and break those organizations that represent educational workers.

Bill 104 says that the newly announced EIC's actions must conform with the Labour Relations Act and the School Boards and Teachers Collective Negotiations Act. It is important that this guarantee remain in Bill 104 and that it be strengthened with details on how the process of school board restructuring will be accomplished for employee groups.

OSSTF recommends that the following principles be placed within the framework of Bill 104 to ensure that the rights of employees are protected and guaranteed after board restructuring. Detailed protections for school board employees must be included based on the following principles:

That there be full and timely disclosure of all relevant information by government and school boards to employee bargaining units;

That there be an active role for bargaining units equal to that of school boards in all discussions with respect to employment or other matters related to school board restructuring;

That current employees be guaranteed job protection; that there be full recognition of seniority; that employees be entitled to the form of contract to which they would have been entitled if there had been no school board restructuring;

That there be full recognition of category placement, qualifications and experience; that there be full recognition of benefits, including sick leave gratuities and service gratuities;

That there be protection regarding maximum distance for involuntary transfer;

That the previous collective agreements remain in place until a new collective agreement is negotiated; and

That if the parties fail to reach a settlement, the first collective agreement arbitration identical to that available under the Ontario Labour Relations Act be established.

Bill 104 and the regulations accompanying it must contain provisions that reflect the procedures of the Ontario Labour Relations Act and the Canadian Labour Congress to solve jurisdictional disputes that may arise among employee groups.

Bill 104 and the regulations accompanying it must contain the following guaranteed protections:

The right to an OLRA-supervised vote to decide which union shall represent similar bargaining units currently employed by different employers;

That all collective agreements remain in place until a new collective agreement is negotiated between the new employer and the new bargaining unit;

That employees are protected from the loss of any rights; and

That successor rights are provided for all OLRA bargaining units.

I have included more detailed descriptions of these protections in my written submission.

Our two major concerns with the EIC are the extreme powers this commission has been given and its mandate to investigate the outsourcing of non-essential services in education. What is most alarming to us is that the decisions of the EIC are final and are not subject to review in court. The commission as it presently exists in Bill 104 is an affront to democracy, and if the legislation remains as written, we fear the commission would lead to the undermining of quality education in Ontario for years to come.

The concept that this commission should have powers that supersede those of democratically elected representatives and that such a commission should be above the rule of law and of due process of law is repugnant to us as citizens of this province. Therefore sections 344 and 346, which give the EIC these extraordinary powers, must be removed from Bill 104.

The suggestion that some services are non-essential to education and that the positions could be outsourced has been devastating to the dedicated educational workers I represent. These employees have been loyal to the board and dedicated to the welfare of students for years. It is appalling that this government would resort to minimizing

their role in education in an effort to make cuts. Such cuts and the privatization of these services can only result in an inferior educational system.

For a moment, let's apply the government's proposal to save money by cutting the supports to education to a construction site project. A builder needs to cut costs but needs to do it in a way not readily noticeable to the public. He decides to save money by using fewer supports for the building, using inferior materials and employing less qualified workers. Initially the appearance of the building will look the same to the public. However, over time, safety and quality problems will surface and increase, and the public will soon see that saving money on supports can have a devastating effect in the long term. The same will hold true if this government is allowed to go forward with their plan to outsource what they are referring to as non-essential services of the education system.

OSSTF developed a full-service school model that they believe is essential to meet the needs of today's students from junior kindergarten to adult education. I am proud to say that the Windsor Board of Education is an excellent example of this model in action. This model includes an educational staff comprising teachers, instructors, administrators, educational associates, technicians, secretaries, custodians and professional student support services. To be effective, this school team works together with parents and students to meet the needs of every student. The government's plan to privatize or outsource part of this team jeopardizes the working relationships and consistency that promote positive physical learning and emotional development in all our students.

The school and administrative secretaries and technical staff I represent are responsible for the smooth running of our board and school offices. Their roles are significant in a school environment and they must be performed by consistent, qualified staff members who are part of the school team and who are knowledgeable about the school community. Secretaries facilitate communication among administration, staff, students, parents, volunteers and members of the community. Secretaries play a vital role in the area of the safety and wellbeing of students by monitoring attendance and parental and custodial issues.

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Our technical members provide invaluable services in audio-visual, library and computer programming. They are responsible for supporting a variety of services for staff and students. It is essential that they remain part of the school team to ensure the appropriate use of today's technology. Their services are vital.

Educational associates are integral members of the school team both at the elementary and secondary levels. In conjunction with the classroom teacher and school administration, they plan and implement special programs for our kindergarten and special needs students. These programs address a variety of medical, emotional, physical and intellectual needs that must be met if these students are going to have the opportunity to experience success.

Staff members in these positions must be consistent, qualified personnel. They assist the students with acquiring social and personal management skills, acquiring an

appropriate level of independence and developing the habits to achieve their best academic performance. Removal of these staff members from the school team or replacing this staff with less qualified employees will jeopardize the integration and programming for our younger and special needs students.

OSSTF's full-service model provides a school and educational environment that is vital to the learning and working of all our students. Our system's effectiveness in addressing the needs of the whole child is at stake if educational support staff are privatized or outsourced. Please don't be fooled into believing that outsourcing support services will not affect the delivery of programming in our classrooms and in our schools. We believe that if the government's plan of outsourcing is implemented, it will have a great negative impact on the safety and learning environments of all our students and our staff.

Therefore this government must develop a realistic definition for classroom services. In addition to the teacher and supplies, all those support services that make student achievement possible must be included in the definition for funding purposes and seen as key components of the educational system. Any other definition of classroom and educational funding would be fraudulent and a betrayal to every student in Ontario.

The definition of classroom services for funding purposes in Bill 104 must include principals; vice-principals; guidance teachers; psychologists; social workers; speech and language professionals; educational associates; office, clerical and technical workers; and custodial and maintenance staff. The government should be using the term "school services" or "educational services" for funding purposes to ensure that the model represents the reality that a quality education includes all services in the school and in its supporting administration buildings.

In order to protect the safety and welfare of Ontario students, we would recommend that section 335(3)(f) of Bill 104 be deleted. We strongly believe that the Education Improvement Commission should not be directed to "consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on how to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards."

In closing, the students of Ontario would be better served if this government rededicated itself to making these changes in consultation with the educational community, slowing the process down to ensure adequate time for consultation and implementation, and changing the legislation to ensure that local boards continue to have the power to be effective advocates for the students in their communities. If this is not done, we fear the government will create conditions that will lead to the privatization of public education in Ontario, and at the very least, lead to an educational system that is not responsive to the specific needs of its community.

The revisions to Bill 104 must assure the public that this government is truly committed to quality education for all students in Ontario. The fears must be put to rest, and this government must prove that it does not have a hidden agenda to privatize education in Ontario and to produce an American-style education system which

fosters affluent suburb education versus desperate inner-core-city-style education.

Thank you for the opportunity and your attention to our submission today.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs Sahli-Scott. You've used up all of your time, and we are grateful for your appearance. Thank you too for your co-presenter.

Mr Wildman: Madam Chair, now that the document has been circulated and the parliamentary assistant is back, could we have an explanation of why the ministry is sending out memos asking for names of people, with a deadline of March 26, when the legislation cannot possibly be passed, even with this government's tight time frame, at that point? Why is it that the government and the ministry are acting as if the implementation has already begun and the so-called Education Improvement Commission is already in operation?

The Chair: Mr Wildman, I thought we had agreed to defer this matter to just before the break.

Mr Wildman: When is the break?

The Chair: In about half an hour, just so we can give the presenters an opportunity.

Mr Wildman: Okay. I want the presenters to know that what they're saying here may have little relevance to what the government is actually doing.

The Chair: May I call upon the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Windsor, Peter Guthrie.

Mr Skarica: Perhaps I should deal with it now.

The Chair: I think we're going to listen to Mr Guthrie.

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION, DISTRICT 1

Mr Peter Guthrie: My name is Peter Guthrie. I am the president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, OSSTF, District 1, here in Windsor. I am representing the public secondary school teachers this afternoon, as well as the students that they teach. I'd like to thank you first for the opportunity, for allowing the secondary school teachers to express their views on the Fewer School Boards Act.

I'm here today because I'm deeply concerned about the impending legislation that is known as the Fewer School Boards Act, or Bill 104. I should make it clear that we support administrative change. We support a cost-effective educational system. We support reasonable and rational plans to improve the quality of instruction and learning in this province and in this community. However, from our perspective, this legislation will not achieve these objectives, and our analysis indicates that these are not innocent changes that are being proposed, as the legislative title indicates. There appear to be no concrete plans whereby the objectives could realistically be attainable without serious negative disruption to the ratepayers, to the curriculum, to the students, to the teachers, and to the educational workers in general.

We believe that Bill 104, if adopted in its current form, will drastically reduce the educational opportunities for our students because it paves the way for dramatically reduced funding that has been the hallmark of Mr Snobelen's tenure as Minister of Education and Training.

Programs that have been central to our philosophy of universal education in which every student is given the opportunity to develop to his or her maximum potential will be lost.

The Windsor board has for many years developed specialized programs in order to address the diverse needs of students in this community. Mentally and physically disadvantaged students are provided with educational opportunities in the community living program at Walkerville Secondary School. Students interested in developing their skills and aptitudes in theatre, visual arts, music or dancing have opportunities to study in these areas at the Windsor Centre for the Creative Arts, a program designed to supplement the regular secondary school program for approximately 140 students. Students with learning disabilities are assisted in their studies by special education teachers known as learning support teachers.

Students afflicted with dyslexia, hyperactivity, or other forms of learning disabilities benefit from instruction in small groups or on an individual basis. Reduced funding has already minimized the effectiveness of this essential service in every secondary school in Windsor.

Approximately 400 students with special needs are provided vocational training that teaches them entry-level employment skills at Century Secondary School. More severely disadvantaged students are taught in the adapted basic program, also located at Century. A French immersion program has developed at Herman Secondary School for students wishing to receive French-language instruction. Ontario youth apprenticeship programs have grown in auto mechanics, sheet metal and fabrication, and the culinary arts. In these programs, students graduate with a secondary school diploma and journeymen's papers in their desired trade. Many of these students move directly into the world of employment upon graduation.

Intellectually gifted students have the opportunity to study in the enriched program at Massey Secondary School, where studies are provided in a more challenging mode that is essential for this unique group of students as they aspire to achieve their academic potential.

These are programs whose value cannot be measured by a test score. These programs enrich students' lives. They make learning meaningful and enjoyable. They make education successful. In spite of the apparent need of these programs in this community, their future appears to be in jeopardy if Bill 104 is adopted. What is needed is more, not less, funding, but this principle runs contrary to the stated objective of the Ministry of Education and Training, which aims to further reduce funding by \$1 billion. The existence of these programs is not mutually compatible with this bill. We fear for their future.

As citizens, as taxpayers, as meaningful members of this community, of this province and of this country, we are astonished at the disregard of our fundamental rights to which we are entitled as members of a modern democratic society. There cannot be any place in this province for the arbitrary powers which are being granted to the Education Improvement Commission. Denying judicial review or the appeal of decisions made by a government commission is unprecedented and has no place in any democracy. It is unthinkable that the powers of a government-appointed commission could supersede those of

democratically elected trustees and that such a commission would be above the rule of law. The right of representation by duly elected representatives is the cornerstone of a democracy. What is the justification in denying rights to local parents, taxpayers, students and elected trustees? This is a blatant affront and disregard of democratic principles.

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It would be a major understatement to say that there are not grave concerns regarding the role of school councils. It is widely understood that the Education Improvement Commission will make recommendations to strengthen the powers of school councils and to increase parental involvement in education governance. While we do not object to this in principle, in reality the effectiveness of school councils varies from school to school. In most of the secondary schools in Windsor, school councils encompass small groups of parents whose involvement, though admirable, is spirited by their son's or daughter's enrolment at a given school. Their knowledge of the school system, curriculum, school policies and administration is, at the very best, limited.

From our experience, most parents do not want or aspire to an expanded role that infringes on some of the duties of current trustees whom they elect. Furthermore, the continuity of expertise by parents who are members of a school council would be lost when their child ceases to be enrolled in the school system. The practice of trial and error would begin again, further destabilizing educational governance. Parents generally do not have the vision of the expanded role which the government desires.

Locally, many of our school councils are small in size, which we interpret to be an indication of their satisfaction with the manner in which their schools currently are being administered. It is our opinion that volunteer parent councils cannot adequately take the place of duly elected and accountable trustees. Although some parents want and demand a say in how our schools function, generally they have neither the time nor resources to manage a portion of a school system. They have traditionally relied upon local trustees who are accountable to them and who not only know the needs of the community but are also readily accessible and accountable to all the voters. To my knowledge, parent councils have never been able to provide the expertise which is needed in the governance of schools, so unless Windsor is an aberration, it is highly unlikely they will be effective here.

Furthermore, this legislation not only reduces the responsibility and accountability of locally elected trustees, it transfers fiscal responsibility from the local level into the hands of the province through the proposed pooling of funds. Local autonomy in the decision-making process will be lost. It is also our concern that the potential outsourcing of education service jobs to the lowest tender will cause much labour unrest in this community. This will further destabilize an already unstable educational environment and will further erode confidence in public education.

Moreover, this legislation differs dramatically from all previous amalgamations of school boards that have taken place over the last several decades. For example, in the

amalgamation of boards in 1969, a previous Conservative government had guaranteed employees' rights of succession and seniority. However, when asked about his government's plans for the current employees of a school board, Mr. Snobelen was and continues to be vague and evasive in his answers. It would appear that there is a lack of commitment and concern for the welfare of current educational employees by this government. Once again, this evasiveness has created a great deal of insecurity among those employed in education. As a consequence, a negative impact is created, as opposed to a positive atmosphere which is so necessary for effective instruction and learning to take place.

Amalgamation of school boards is not new to this province. The process that is outlined in Bill 104, however, is very unique in that it outlines its objectives but lacks comprehensive plans for implementation. Previous governments embarked on this initiative through carefully planned legislation that defined guarantees to employees and guided the process through successful implementation. Bill 104 demonstrates an insensitivity to the needs of students, teachers and educational workers in general. It has created an aura of suspicion of government for the citizens of this province.

In our view, all of this uncertainty which surrounds this legislation has already negatively impacted on the instruction of our students and it has little prospect of achieving the lofty objectives to which it ascribes. While the rest of the world, including our North American neighbours to the south — but in Windsor they're to the north — are investing in education to achieve the standards of Ontario schools, it's ironic that we're reducing our commitment to our students, who represent the future of this province.

Our recommendation is simple: consult, rethink, replan and proceed with caution. The proposed changes through Bill 104 are insidious and undemocratic. To proceed with these plans will damage our system of education for decades.

Mr Wildman: In light of the document, which I'll show you, that I've tabled with the committee, are you confident that your concerns will be properly taken into account by the government before the implementation of Bill 104?

Mr Guthrie: I have absolutely no confidence in this government's willingness or commitment to students, to education in general and to the employees of education.

Mr Bill Grimmer (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I'd like to raise the comment you made on pages 4 and 5 that "parents generally do not have the vision of the expanded role which the government desires." Earlier today we had the opportunity to hear from a parents' advisory group who seemed to be most enthusiastic and well-informed and were quite eager to take on responsibility in regard to education. Could you perhaps explain what you mean by "parents generally do not have the vision"?

Mr Guthrie: I can explain from my own experience, having been either a teacher or a secondary school vice-principal in four different schools. In the four different schools that I have been employed in, I have experienced essentially one parent council group that was well-organized, well-informed and willing to participate to the

level to which the current expectation seems to be. In most cases parent councils are very small, and it is very difficult in some cases to get parents involved because of the diversity of their own lives and I believe as well due to the satisfaction parents have in the job that teachers in this community are doing and the way in which our schools are being administered.

Mrs McLeod: Along the same line, we've heard representatives of well over 200 parent councils at this point in our committee hearings, and parent councils are saying, by and large, they're anxious to be involved in education in their particular schools. They feel there has to be some training and some support and some resources so they can continue to grow.

The other thing they've said virtually almost unanimously, with one exception this morning, is that they don't want to take the place of school boards. It was unfortunate that the Essex group that made the presentation on the value of school councils didn't get a chance to finish their brief, because they also say school councils should not replace school boards. That's a constant theme we hear. Are you concerned that, by default, school councils may end up replacing school boards because school boards will become unworkable under Bill 104?

Mr Guthrie: I think that is a very realistic possibility and a fear at the same time. I still do not have the confidence at the present time that school councils can adequately do the job that our duly elected trustees do. In the trustees, we have a group of people who have a very serious commitment to their role. They spend many hours in fulfilling that role to serve the students, the administrators of schools and the teachers in the community. I don't perceive that school councils at any time will exist with the level of dedication that exists in our current trustees.

The Chair: Thank you very much on behalf of the committee for the time you took to make your presentation.

1530

OXFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILS

The Chair: The Oxford county school councils: Betty Pittman. Welcome, Ms Pittman. I notice you have a co-presenter. Perhaps you'd introduce her to start.

Mrs Betty Pittman: I will, thank you. You have to think Woodstock now, not Windsor. Thank you for squeezing me in. I know we were late applicants and I appreciate the opportunity to come.

My name is Betty Pittman and I'm here essentially because I gave birth. I am following up on the responsibilities of those births. One was birth by Caesarean and one by adoption, and now I am looking after those two children, who are in the public school system.

I am also the chairperson of the Oliver Stephens Senior Public School Advisory Council, and that is a consequence of volunteering to listen to children read in my child's class several years ago. I'm unelected, unmandated and unchosen, but I am accepted as a spokesperson for a number of the school councils and the parent councils in Oxford county.

This is Janice Rouse. She is also an active member on three levels of school councils where each of her children

attend — elementary, senior public and high school. She is here as a support for me. We're not about to present a polished political statement, but we have promised to present all of the feedback that we were given from the parents.

We have 42 schools, and 14 of them made direct submissions to us. Copies of their actual submissions are with the Chair. Some 15 of them gave positive verbal support to come but felt they were not prepared in the short time to present a brief to you. Some of them were in the midst of electing new members. One group is grieving the death of one of their members in a car accident, and other things just precluded them contributing. Twelve of our schools are represented by Home and School and only two abstained from taking part in any way. Each submission was accepted and all the points and comments were included, although statements were not repeated. Some came from joint council consensus and some from individual council members and the parents they canvassed.

Parents who are a part of this are awake. We are at home and the lights are on, and more of them are coming on fast and furious. At times we say "duh" more than our kids do, when we begin to see the big picture. We see and accept the learning curve that is before us and welcome the challenge of change. Some of us have been asking for this for a long time.

All of this is not in spite of the fact that many of us are the products of an education system that is being maligned today, but because of it. Many of us were around when the government decided to have a public and a separate board and integration of special needs children to their neighbourhood schools, with all the subsequent financial commitments they brought.

The creation now of four school boards and continued integration has its financial demands that we have to adjust to. Funding is funding. Whether it's federal, provincial or municipal taxes, it's all coming out of my pocket. Many of us have long seen and acknowledged the need for change, but our message is: "Slow down. What is the hurry?"

Please take into consideration a slower timetable that doesn't always look at the money issue. You are doing in one year what should probably take three to five. The tactic of pushing through changes with little time or opportunity for input is successful in allowing those in power to bulldoze their views through. However, it is the antithesis of democracy and it shows little respect for the citizens.

One doesn't always need to justify change by trashing the past and the present and deifying the proposed future. Wholesale change is often a misuse of information. An example of this is that shortly our children in grades 3 and 6 will be tested for skills based on curriculum that they have not been taught. The information will be misleading, but the confidence and the integrity of the children — and I'm thinking of my daughter in particular — will be eroded. If you want to test the curriculum of a grade 3 student, test the grade 4. If you want to test the curriculum of the grade 6, then go to the grade 7 student. Don't pistol-whip us one day, creating a fear, and then offer us a bodyguard the next to calm the fear you've created.

Be specific in your information; be clear and honest and give facts. Many of us don't have enough factual information to make informed, educated decisions and give opinions. Have a strategy in place and engage in full consultation. An environment of mistrust and fear for our kids' education future is a breeding ground for charter schools, a two-tier education system for the élite and well-off. Our communities and the sense of community will be swallowed up. Perhaps you're aware of that.

The education community in Oxford has and is constantly changing to reflect the world around it. The integration of exceptional children; innovative approaches to curriculum; tougher policies on school violence; supportive education; counselling in groups to students who are victims of violence in their homes and with their peers; support and assistance to parents in their new roles on the advisory councils; seeking community input on ways to improve school life; introduction and constant updating of technology; delayed school opening and twinning of schools are just some of the practical examples in our county that we are experiencing. With the new funding potential, we look forward to this and more.

I want you to hear some of the feelings that were written in many of the submissions from parents who were tuned in to the political rhetoric: fear, anxiety, anger, being overwhelmed, feeling betrayed, feeling concerned, horrified, rushed, left in the dark. When they see the government handling of the megacity, it scares them that nobody will be listening. We are not against change, but we do want it done in an orderly manner. We are the consumers of this service. We need to be consulted, advised, educated, informed, shown plans, know rules and strategies, see big-picture goals and learn the political language. For many of our parents, this was the first time they had ever handled a piece of legislation.

Here are some thoughts and concerns and possible amendments for the fewer trustees in the amalgamation, and these were points submitted by parents.

Bigger is not always better, and smaller works. Consider the joining of two or three boards instead of four.

How representative can a board be that has only two from a given geographical area?

How accessible will this board be to the parent living at the other end of the new board's jurisdiction, who will have to consider transportation costs and time in order to be seen or heard?

Inconsistent programs across the board — and we're talking about Oxford and the London area. When we talk about London, a very big city, and Princeton, a very small town, the inconsistencies will be there. It will help in funding of large urban areas, but it will be too costly to access a lot of the programs, either in time or busing of students.

Boards would be more responsive and representative when the base is the same, if it's a rural base or it's an urban base. An example of this in Oxford is the fact that some of our schools start late in the year due to the farming activity. There is a potential to be swallowed up in the big boards for little places like us. We've already in the media been referred to as the "Oxford county hicks."

We think you should consider joining the public and the separate school boards in one area. A positive would be to access the state-of-the-art technologies and special programs that as a small board we haven't been able to have, but we're not sure of the new funding model and we need to know.

Fiscal concerns should be balanced with the human element. Quality should not be sacrificed, and assuming the debt of less frugal boards than ours is a major concern. Amalgamation itself has become an accepted reality in our parent submissions, but who we amalgamate with is really important to us and it is a concern. The majority of our county want to stay in a rural-based board, and east, in our view, seems to be the most sensible.

A stated purpose of this bill is to improve accountability, but to whom? Another purpose is to improve effectiveness of boards, but when they're so far away and so few are representing us, how can it be more effective? Our boards have no real power and they become physically inaccessible as well. Quality education is another goal, but when there will be inconsistencies within a board by geography alone, what will happen to the quality?

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Outsourcing: No teacher stands alone in a classroom. Out-of-classroom personnel — what does it mean and who defines it? Who's classified as non-instructional?

The foundation and the infrastructure that goes in our schools makes it so that teacher and those students have important supports to operate and form an effective classroom. There are many contributors to a successful learning experience. Don't underestimate or devalue any of our workers. Be clear about teacher-student ratios and definition of "teacher" and the definition of "student."

The teacher-librarian is a partner with teachers in the classroom. They develop research projects, they are into curriculum integration, they develop learning skills, select resources, they motivate learners, they're partners with the students, they teach them to access all the books, computers and technology and help them with their research and their independent learning skills. They maintain academic resources and they instruct individual groups of students. For many schools, the library is the hub of technology. In being fiscally responsible, we don't have state-of-the-art computers in every classroom, nor do we have computer science teachers in every classroom. We focus ours in the library and our library teacher is an essential part of that. A technician will simply open the door, keep the library quiet and lock up at night.

The Education Improvement Commission: This is the part of the bill that has rung more bells, blown more whistles and sent up more warning flags for our parents. The need for such a commission is a given. Limited power and the ability to appeal is the basis of our democracy. This commission's power, above judicial, would be greater than the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, greater than the Statutory Powers Procedure Act and the Employment Standards Act. More power is being given to fewer people.

Members will be political appointments first and other qualifications will be secondary. We would like you to open up the qualifications required and the process of appointment to scrutiny.

Ensure parent council representation is on the commission. This could be an amendment.

Members of the commission will be paid. The bill states that trustees work for no more than \$5,000. Apply this to this commission and the committee members in an amendment.

Membership guidelines are not defined, yet trustee membership and voting powers are clear. The commission is designed to serve the public but is above questioning. They are mandated to be accountable only once a year to the minister and they seem to have powers that can even overturn this legislation. This could be an amendment focus.

Having the ability to negate negotiated contracts is a recipe for insecurity and instability. Plan to be smarter at the bargaining table. There is too much at stake to flex political muscles on a hill that can be won a better way. Amend this power plan.

The EIC's proposed powers are too broad and sweeping. There is no autonomy in the proposed school boards. Budgets will be created at the board level but subject to change at the commission level. The further away from the source of the spending, the less representative and accountable it will be to the students, parents and staff of schools. This is amendment material.

Parents have a right to a democratic process. If the so-called local board has no authority and the commission has no appeal process, where is the democracy?

The Chair: Ms Pittman, I ask you to wrap up, please.

Mrs Pittman: Yes. What we're passing over is the importance of our secretaries and the importance of our janitors. Our secretaries we feel are at the level of executive assistants and often are not given that.

In summary, we would ask you to reflect on the suggestions and the concerns and the thoughts of the in-the-trenches people who have contributed to this submission. Listen to the local concerns about amalgamation and amend this bill to reflect the understanding of the importance of size of boards and the similar bases. Listen to local concerns and amend this bill to reflect and then redefine the membership, the salaries, the powers and the areas of jurisdiction and appeal process of the Education Improvement Commission. Listen to the concerns from interested and involved parents. Amend this bill to include them in the decision-making bodies. Give them the opportunity to be the members of the commission, the committees and the government hearings. Listen to our concerns and slow down.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs Pittman and Mrs Rouse, for your presentation. While you didn't get a chance to read all of it, I assure you the whole document will form part of the record of the committee.

SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION,
LOCAL 210

The Chair: I call upon the Service Employees International Union, Local 210. Thank you very much for being

here. Welcome to our committee. We're looking forward to your presentation.

Mr Ted Durham: First off, I'd like to thank the members of the committee for inviting us to speak. The Service Employees International Union is going to concentrate its submissions on just one section, although we consider Bill 104 fatally flawed throughout.

In our submission, clause 335(3)(f) causes us the most concern. It's that section where the Education Improvement Commission is mandated to facilitate the contracting out of jobs. Our local union represents several hundred what you would consider non-instructional positions in Essex and Kent counties. These are the jobs that people are dependent upon to feed their families, jobs which provide taxes to the very government which now seeks to eliminate them. We fail to recognize how the contracting out of these jobs will improve the education of our children.

The very name of the commission would seem to indicate that the purpose of the commission is to improve education. However, Bill 104 does nothing to improve education but merely restricts funding. The most objectionable part, clause 335(3)(f), does not require discussion of whether contracting out of jobs is cost-efficient or preferable; rather, the commission's role is to promote and facilitate the contracting out of these jobs.

There are barriers, however, to the government's plan to do this. These barriers are called collective agreements. There is also legislation in Ontario which acts as a barrier to the contracting out of these jobs. With these protections in place, why would we be concerned? Our concern stems primarily from the leaked cabinet document of October 3, 1996, of which I have provided a copy to you at tab A.

In this document, the cabinet has listed collective agreements and successor rights as barriers to restructuring. With these issues standing in the way, the government is faced with difficulties in achieving its goals. The cabinet document suggested the answer: The government simply introduces legislation to override collective agreements, have blanket removal of successor rights and removal of service standards. If anyone believes this isn't a likelihood, take a look at the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act and see what has happened. It's a real likelihood in Ontario.

Since the 1962-63 session of the Legislature, workers have had the protection of successor rights and, through an amendment in 1970, have had their collective agreements recognized and honoured by contractors. The Legislature recognized the need, as described in the Marvel Jewellery case, that successor rights "Recognize that collective bargaining rights, once attained, should have some permanence. Rights created by the act, or under the collective agreements, should not be allowed to evaporate with a change of employer.... So long as the business continues to function, the obligations run with that business, regardless of any ownership."

We see no reason that shouldn't continue. If that line of thinking was accurate in 1970-75, it's accurate today. We shouldn't go back 20 years in time.

The purpose of successor rights was clearly pointed out by the Ontario Labour Relations Board in the Aircraft

Metal Specialty case, which said it is "To prevent the subversion of bargaining rights by transactions which are designed to get rid of the union." Any removal of bargaining rights or statutory override provisions of collective agreements to rid themselves of contracting out, in our view does just that.

1550

In regard to contracting out and the contracting out provisions found in many collective agreements in Ontario, the contracting out of jobs does not guarantee that you will save money or that it will be more efficient costwise or otherwise. Perhaps the best-case scenario of using the private sector to provide public services is the American health care system. The American health care system is a prime example of the inadequacies and cost overruns of privatization. Not only does it fail to provide coverage for some 39 million Americans, but it manages to do this at a cost which is much higher than the Canadian cost. Americans are paying 14% of their gross national product on health care, compared to Canada's 10%.

In British Columbia, Premier Vander Zalm privatized highway maintenance. However, there was a recent study that said that the cost had substantially increased and preventive maintenance suffered.

The Macdonald royal commission found that under most circumstances no economic benefit or efficiency gains can be expected through privatization. This only makes sense when you consider the fact that any private contractor has to make a profit. They must realize profits, and profits, like taxes, are extra expenses that are built into the costing of a service that's contracted out. These are expenses that do not have to be paid when using your own employees. It flows from this that when services are contracted out, wages are lowered and services are cut so that a contractor can make those profits.

In Calgary, where cleaners in public schools were contracted out, a number of complaints followed. One Calgary principal summed it up this way: "The most basic cleaning functions continue to be either neglected or ignored." Ontario neither wants nor deserves this in our public schools.

This attack on school board workers through Bill 104 is unwarranted and unnecessary. We ask that you carry the message back that in order for Bill 104 to even start to become acceptable, clause 335(3)(f) has to be removed totally or, in the alternative, guarantee those jobs and those rights of collective agreements, protect them. We didn't have time to reflect fully on the bill, but a cursory reading would seem to indicate that Bill 104 should be scrapped and you should be sent back to the drawing-board. I thank you for your time.

Mr Skarica: On the outsourcing aspect, we've heard on a number of occasions that in some situations it would be beneficial and in other situations it wouldn't be. Could you indicate some of the potential downsides and any upsides of outsourcing in your area that you're aware of?

Mr Durham: In our view, particularly in the area of cleaning schools, the downside of outsourcing is short-cuts. In order for a profit to be realized by the contractor, the contractor has to have fewer staff, and to have fewer staff means you reduce. You reduce the number of staff,

you reduce the service that's being provided, and it's an issue of public health. That's an absolute downside to contracting out in our public schools, and that's just in the area of cleaning. That's not in the area that would include those people who would be considered traditionally clerical or support staff, that arena. The upside of outsourcing services? I can see none.

Mrs McLeod: You might be interested to know that the committee has already heard representations from two boards, the Essex Roman Catholic today and the Durham board last Thursday, that have withdrawn outsourced contracts because they thought it was neither cost-effective nor good for their schools.

You might also want to know that we have already submitted amendments that would call for the repeal of the section that directs that the EIC pursue outsourcing, and we have also submitted an amendment that would provide for protection of contracts and successor rights should Bill 104 go ahead. I don't know whether the government will support those, but I think it's important for you to know we're hearing the submissions that are being made.

Having said that, my question is, what happens if the municipalities end up being responsible for all school construction and school maintenance and school busing? I think then all of the protections we might be able to build into 104 become moot, because the whole responsibility is turned over to the municipalities.

Mr Durham: First, I'm very pleased to hear the information you just gave me. I'm excited to know that people are reconsidering moves such as contracting out.

In terms of the municipality, if the municipality is given responsibility for those areas, then we turn our sights on the municipality to ensure that it's being done right, properly and in accordance with what we believe would be good labour relations. But in order for us to do that, we can't have the provincial government say, "Sorry, we're going to override anything the municipality may do." We're prepared to deal with the municipality at this time if that's where our fight lies.

Mrs Boyd: Thank you very much for your presentation. I certainly share the concerns you're expressing around the long-term effects of outsourcing because I don't think it's been well thought out. The previous speakers didn't get a chance to read out their section on custodians. They were saying they are more than just sweepers. Who will clean up the vomit, spills, broken glass and plugged toilets during the day? Apparently the profit only lies when you come in as a flying group in the middle of the night, clean up the school and leave it, and then there's no one on site to do these kinds of things. Would you say that's your understanding of how the profit really comes out for a privatized company?

Mr Durham: In our view, that is the only way the profit comes out for a privatized company.

Mrs Boyd: Well, I would say it's not the only way because lowering wages and standards is certainly the other way.

Mr Durham: Part and parcel.

The Chair: Thank you very much for being here with us today and presenting your views.

We have a number of matters to deal with. If I could deal with some documentation that has been tabled, we have distributed a motion by Mr Skarica that was passed last Thursday with respect to the specific conditions in the north, and I've undertaken to write a letter to the minister to forward that motion.

You also have before you a response to question 37 of the 51 questions that have been submitted either to the minister or to the researcher. This is the only one that was submitted to the researcher and I'll ask him to speak to it. Did you want to say something?

Mr Ted Glenn: No, that's okay.

The Chair: This is in response to your question 37, Ms McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: Yes, and I've already had an opportunity to speak to the researcher about it. I appreciate getting information on the protections that were built in in 1968 for teachers. I'm hoping we'll also be able to get some information as to what protections were built in for non-teaching personnel.

The Chair: We'll provide that, and we have 50 more questions to go.

Mrs McLeod: That's all right. We've got 24 hours.

The Chair: As I've said before, I think the committee should have at least 24 hours to consider the answers, and I would expect that those responses would be here by 12 o'clock tomorrow.

Two items have been deferred from earlier today. One is a motion by Mr Duncan. Would you like to speak to it?

Mr Duncan: Yes, just briefly, because we've heard this repeatedly from a number of people. Indeed the government has said that it's concerned about the quality of education and wants to improve the quality of education. I've put forward a motion that simply would direct the Legislature to appoint a select committee, which is provided for in our rules of procedure, that would allow for full public hearings on all aspects of education, including governance, curriculum, standards and accountability, financing and future direction.

What we've heard repeatedly — we've heard it in other cities, we've heard it here today on a number of occasions — is that this bill is only one piece of a puzzle, and what causes the greatest consternation is what we don't know. What also causes consternation is people's feeling of disempowerment, that they're not able to participate in the very important discussions that surround many other parts of education. I'll remind the committee that according to the 1996-97 estimates, education funding has already been cut by some \$760 million and we expect further cuts through time. A number of delegations have expressed their concern that the government in fact intends much deeper cuts.

1600

It would be our view that this type of initiative would serve not only the public but the government as well because the government, I believe, although our politics may differ and our views may differ, wants to see all aspects of education addressed. I would hope they would be prepared to have public discussions not only around Bill 104, but the more important issues. We haven't even had time to talk about curriculum, something that's

extremely important. We have not had a chance to talk about true classroom standards and accountability, let alone future direction. This is not to suggest that we further get bogged down in studies, but rather to suggest there's an opportunity to advance education now, to do it in a time-effective way, to get all the pieces of the pie on the table and to allow full accountability.

The Chair: Thank you. Any further debate?

Mr Skarica: As you're aware, the Royal Commission on Learning travelled the province extensively in the not-too-distant past and had extensive recommendations, many of which the government has implemented in the last year, including the establishment of the College of Teachers and the EQAO. As well, many of the matters that you indicated a committee should travel the province on will in fact be done by the EIC. They will be looking into governance and future direction and their mandate is, if and when the legislation is passed, that they will examine many of these matters and report back to the minister.

The government's position is that it's now time for action. There are a number of studies that have been done over the many years and you're familiar with many of them. The government now intends to act on the studies, mainly the Royal Commission on Learning, which is generally accepted I think by all parties as an exemplary document. As well, the EIC will be reporting to the minister and the government will act on those recommendations.

Mr Wildman: I support and our caucus will support the motion. In response to Mr Skarica's comments, I would just say there are many things in the royal commission's report that the government has ignored. There are other things that they've done which are contradictory to the recommendations of the royal commission, such as junior kindergarten and early childhood education. We can cherry-pick as much as we want, but I would think that Mr Caplan, who when he appeared before the committee made it very clear what he thinks of this government and its agenda — and he was the co-chair of the royal commission.

Second, in terms of the time for action and the Education Improvement Commission, obviously it's already acting even though the bill hasn't been passed. The problem with that commission is, as we've been told by many presenters, the vast majority, is that it is unaccountable. It is not the same as a select committee with elected MPPs who are accountable to their constituents and to the people of Ontario. The Education Improvement Commission, as set forward in Bill 104, is accountable only to the minister and can't even have its decisions tested in a court.

This is a complete denial of democracy, which is what the motion is proposing: a democratic process, an open process, where everyone involved in education in the province has input, and then elected members of the Legislature make recommendations that will benefit the students of Ontario. The Education Improvement Commission is the denial of that whole process and it doesn't answer the proposal that is made in the motion.

Mrs McLeod: I'm more than a little bit surprised by the parliamentary assistant's response. If in fact this

government was acting on the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Learning report, we would not need a select committee on education to go across the province once again. But if the royal commission's recommendations had been accepted, none of us would be here today and Bill 104 would not be before us.

A very fundamental recommendation of the royal commission — and we had Gerald Caplan here earlier in our committee hearings — was that there not be school board amalgamations because there was no cost-effectiveness that could be demonstrated in any studies that had ever been done, there was clearly no benefit to students in a classroom of school board amalgamation, and school board amalgamations would create such a process of confusion and disorientation and disruption that the resources and energies of school boards and all involved in education would be directed away from meeting the needs of students in the classroom.

I only wish that what Mr Skarica had indicated was in fact this government's direction. I feel very strongly, as Mr Wildman has expressed, that the Education Improvement Commission is not a substitute for a committee of the Legislature. There is nobody elected on that commission. There is no indication of any process which will allow anybody who is elected to have any part of the process or the decisions that are ultimately made by that commission.

Mr Skarica: Just in response, there was also another commission, and that was the Sweeney commission that travelled the province for approximately two years to deal with the advisability of these amalgamations —

Mr Wildman: Not these amalgamations.

The Chair: One at a time, please.

Mr Skarica: Mr Sweeney was appointed by an NDP government and was a Liberal cabinet minister. Dealing with cherry-picking, I recall that when the government proceeded with the College of Teachers legislation there was substantial opposition from the opposition parties regarding implementation of that legislation even though it had been recommended by the Royal Commission on Learning.

Mrs McLeod: I regret the fact that we're using up our very brief break today to debate this, but if Mr Skarica is so determined, first of all, in terms of the College of Teachers, and I don't particularly care to get into that debate, the specific recommendations of the Royal Commission on Learning were debated, as to whether or not that was what was brought forward. In terms of the Sweeney report, there have been numerous presentations to this committee that if the Sweeney recommendations could be referred to by the government, it would be infinitely preferable to the proposals for amalgamation that this government has brought forward. So one way or the other, give us the royal commission, give us Sweeney, give us something that's better than Bill 104.

Mr Duncan: Not only that, but the government just doesn't seem to get it. We want to talk about curriculum. We want to talk about standards. We want to talk about things that are important in the classroom. This bill doesn't do it. To suggest somehow that this is going to improve education or improve our students' ability to be educated, we've had presentation after presentation that

says not only will it not do that, but it robs fundamental democratic principles.

If you're truly interested in improving education, you'll let us address curriculum, you'll let us address standards and accountability, and you'll let us talk about future direction, because so far we haven't done that and it just appears that all these hearings are nothing but a sham. If you really want to deal with education, you'll vote in favour of this motion.

Mr Wildman: I won't repeat what was said, but just to indicate that the problem with the process that we're involved in now, or one of the major problems, is that it's backwards. We shouldn't be doing these administrative changes before we know what the funding formula is. We shouldn't be doing these things before we know how curriculum changes are going to be done and how they're going to be implemented. We shouldn't be doing this in the absence of knowing what the government is proposing with collective bargaining.

The advantage of the motion is that it wants to look at the whole education system and the changes that are being proposed and what the impacts might be rather than doing it piecemeal, the way the government is doing it. They're doing it, in my view, ass-backwards. Excuse my language.

The Chair: Seeing no further debate, we'll put it to a vote. All in favour of the motion? Opposed? The motion is defeated.

If we could move now to the second deferred item, Mr Wildman, you've already spoken to this issue. Perhaps you'd like to simply summarize.

Mr Wildman: I've already raised it and I've tabled the document. I'd like to have it confirmed that this is a memo from Bill Jock, who is in the regional office of the Ministry of Education and Training. It's on their letterhead from London.

If that is confirmed, then frankly I'd like to have a serious explanation of this March 26 deadline, because it seems to me that if this memo is genuine, what it means is that the Ministry of Education and Training is proceeding as if the legislation were already in place, and that makes this whole process a sham and a farce and it means this government intends to proceed. It doesn't matter; we might as well not have the clause-by-clause hearings on Wednesday. There are no real changes that are going to take place, at least not with the Education Improvement Commission, because it's already operating and started and it's arranging its meetings so that it can implement Bill 104 as is, it appears.

1610

The Chair: Mr Wildman has asked for clarification.

Mr Skarica: I find the wording of the document unfortunate myself. As you know, Mr Cooke and Ann Vanstone have been travelling the province already on a consultant basis, speaking to a variety of school boards and education officials throughout the province. For example, we heard on March 18 that they had been in your area, Mr Wildman, in northern Ontario, and had similar-type meetings as proposed in this document with the school boards in northern Ontario.

In fact as a result of those meetings, on February 18, 1997, the school board members and directors of educa-

tion of the proposed district school board 6 gave the directors the direction to prepare a proposal considering other options in relation to the proposed district school board. They in fact did so, and as a result we heard that, after meetings, their proposal was — and I'll read from their submission to us:

"3.1 In the spirit of cooperation, efficiency and local governance, the Beardmore, Geraldton, Longlac and Area Board of Education, the Lake Superior Board of Education, the Lakehead Board of Education and the Nipigon-Red Rock Board of Education propose the formation of district school board number 6A and 6B."

Similarly, we heard as well from the Dryden Board of Education, the Fort Frances-Rainy River Board of Education and the Kenora Board of Education, again on March 18, which had similar meetings after meeting with Ms Vanstone and Mr Cooke. As well, they met in anticipation of the proposed legislation and they made a recommendation as follows:

"The government change the boundaries of proposed district school board number 5 to create at least two boards. The two-board structure would have the Kenora Board of Education, Dryden Board of Education and Red Lake Board of Education together as one board, and the Fort Frances-Rainy River and Atikokan boards of education as the other new board. All five boards have unanimously agreed to this proposal."

Not only was it appropriate for them to meet, it was helpful to us, because as a result of those submissions and those meetings in anticipation of the legislation, this committee moved as follows:

"That the standing committee on social development urge the minister to advise the Education Improvement Commission to review the submissions this committee has received regarding proposed district school board boundaries in northern Ontario, particularly regarding the challenges of distance and technology infrastructure."

We've heard from those boards and they felt it was prudent, in anticipation of the legislation, to come up with their own recommendations. In fact they're not the only boards. We heard in Sudbury as well that they're now moving in anticipation of the legislation after meeting with Mr Cooke and Ms Vanstone.

The position of the government is that it's unfortunate the wording is as it is. That's not the intent of it. Mr Cooke and Ms Vanstone have been having similar meetings in northern Ontario for some time, and you're aware of them. In fact they've been helpful to the committee.

As well, it's interesting to note on the second attachment the parties who are going to be consulted and give submissions and direction "to ascertain and clarify concerns and issues," as is put in the memo. You have trustees, the chairs of the boards, a student trustee, directors, supervisory officers, presidents of the local teacher affiliates, presidents of local bargaining units, representatives of boards and two French-language representatives per board. It seems to me that we've been asked repeatedly in virtually every submission that the government do consult with the stakeholders, and that is exactly what's occurring and has been occurring for some time now in Ontario.

Mrs McLeod: I don't think any of us are surprised that the so-called consultants who, if this legislation passes, will become the co-chairs of the EIC are going to be coming to Windsor. Mr Skarica is right: We know very well that they have been in other communities. We have been raising at this committee repeatedly the kinds of things that are being said by the consultants who indeed are fashioning themselves as commissioners and are proceeding to work on the implementation of legislation which has not yet passed.

In Sudbury, I think you fail to mention that after the commissioners came in, the Sudbury board thought it was appropriate to go ahead and appoint its own local education improvement committee so that they would perhaps get a jump on everyone else.

The consultants — they're not yet called commissioners — have also been making statements to these groups, apparently on behalf of the government, which we've been asking Mr Skarica to clarify. For example, when Mr Cooke says that existing contracts will be protected under the new boards, are we going to see that incorporated in the legislation as of Wednesday on the basis of what Mr Cooke has told various people he's been presenting with?

When he was in Sudbury, the commissioners — not yet commissioners — apparently told the Sudbury board that the local education improvement committees would indeed be elected. We've asked for clarification of whether or not that in fact is going to be the process, and if so, how will those elections take place?

None of that takes away from the fact that what we're going through here is a sham if that group is continuing to carry out its own consultations and is not paying any attention to the kinds of submissions that are being made to the very committee that has been set up by the Legislature to have hearings on Bill 104. That's why I have already asked that if this bill does become law, we have a public meeting of this committee with the EIC to determine just what they have heard of the submissions that have been made to this committee.

I would further draw your attention to a part of this act which I don't understand. I'm almost afraid to draw attention to it in case it disappears as the only government amendment on Wednesday, but it says very clearly —

Mr Skarica: Which section?

Mrs McLeod: It's subsection 7(8): "A person who establishes a geographic area under a regulation made under subclause (3)(d)(ii)," — which establishes new boards — "shall have regard to any relevant submissions made by any person."

I would just suggest that there have been a great many very relevant submissions made by a great many people with regard to geographic boundaries, and I trust that the EIC, if it becomes a reality, is paying attention to every one of those.

Mrs Boyd: I'm quite amazed at Mr Skarica's comments. Are the people of Windsor to take it from what he said that in fact when this meeting happens on April 9, they can decide they don't want the boundaries that have been suggested in terms of the act? That seemed to be what he was suggesting, that this is an opportunity for people to talk to these so-called consultants at this point

and make recommendations which he seems to be making some suggestion might be taken into account.

If that's the case — and he suggests it is for northern Ontario — and his own motion suggests that northern Ontario should be treated differently, what about the southwest? We heard that the Oxford County Board of Education has expressed similar concerns around community of interest and so on. So I am quite amazed at his comment.

I would say it's very clear from this memorandum, which is written obviously by a senior official of the Ministry of Education in southwest region — let's look at this first item.

"The purpose of the meeting is twofold:

"(1) To obtain information about what stage boards are at in the implementation process — how far along are they?"

How far along? Before this bill even becomes law and these people are here presenting to this committee as though what they have to say is actually being listened to? This is contempt. This government has consistently displayed contempt of the legislative process. This is a very good and continuing example of the kind of contempt this government has for the whole legislative process.

Mrs Papatello: My question is for Mr Skarica: Would you please answer the question that was initially put forward with the launching of this copy of the memo? The question was: Why are we here, wasting our time as an entire committee, spending much of your taxpayers' money to travel across Ontario, when the commission, which has no right of appeal for anyone who is unduly harmed by its outcome, is already on the road and making determinations that even Mr Skarica, as the assistant to the Minister of Education, cannot change?

Please answer the question of why you are spending taxpayers' money with this supposed budget-conscious Conservative government? Why not just scrap the whole public hearing process, because the commission is already a step ahead of you, and you're the assistant to the Minister of Education?

1620

Mr Skarica: I just want you to remember those words, "right to appeal," because there are amendments coming and you will then see that we have listened to people.

Mrs Papatello: That was not my question. You have to answer my question, please. Why are we here?

Mr Skarica: We are here to hear submissions on this legislation.

Mrs Papatello: But the commission has already heard them.

The Chair: Please, Mrs Papatello.

Mr Skarica: No. And it's not a commission. They are, at this point, officially consultants, whether you like that or not. They have been travelling the province and they have been listening to other boards. In fact, it's helped our committee in that we did pass this motion. Had Mr Cooke and Ms Vanstone not gone out in northern Ontario, it would have been, in the way it's turned out, a disservice to this committee, because they've helped us already by doing that.

Mrs Papatello: Just as a supplementary, they don't care what this committee passes or not because they don't

need this committee. That commission has more power than you as the assistant to the Minister of Education. So it doesn't matter a whit that you've brought forward a motion to look at changes, because that commission is going to be responsible for boundary changes regardless of the outcome of this committee. So let's call a spade a spade. Why is this budget-conscious Conservative government spending valuable taxpayers' money that could easily be spent on an educational assistant to a disabled child in our system, and you're traipsing around Ontario with this sham?

Mr Wildman: I've listened to the debate on this matter and the explanation, and I must say with due respect, I don't accept that this is just unfortunate wording. It's unfortunate all right, but it's not just the wording. It's unfortunate because it means that we're already involved in the implementation process before the legislation has even been passed, which is what my colleague and others have said in fact amounts to contempt.

So with that in mind, Chair, I would move a motion.

The Chair: That would be very helpful, Mr Wildman.

Mr Wildman: I move that the standing committee on social development invite Mr Bill Jock of the London regional office of the Ministry of Education and Training to appear before the committee at the committee meeting in Brantford tomorrow to explain the "implementation" process described in the memorandum I tabled in the committee today, and that the committee add 10 minutes at the beginning of our meeting in Brantford to hear Mr Jock.

The Chair: Any debate on the motion?

Mr Crozier: I certainly hope that the representatives of the Liberal caucus consider supporting that motion, notwithstanding the fact that there are a couple of us who aren't official members of this committee and can't vote on it, but if I were, I would.

The Chair: You can certainly speak to it.

Mr Crozier: Thank you. I want to clarify for those present who have stuck with us throughout the day that when Mr Cooke and Ms Vanstone are called consultants, to give you some indication of the way this government handles issues like this and handles the opposition and handles free speech and input, originally these two individuals were appointed as a commission. That was prior even to second reading of this bill.

When the government was called on that — why would you put a commission into effect when it really didn't have the authority to be the commission because the bill hadn't received second reading? — they'd already hired them, as of February 1. Mr Cooke, in fact, had already resigned as a member of the provincial Parliament. So they had to find quickly: "What are we going to do with these folks? Well, we'll call them consultants, because everybody hires consultants."

I support what has been discussed today. It's like being locked up in a room when budgets are being presented or when bills are being presented. It's like having debate closed on important issues. That's just simply the way this government treats the opposition, and I think to a great extent public input.

Mr Skarica: I'd just like to say that the government's given its explanation as to what occurred. I don't think

it's necessary to have this individual brought in. If you're suspicious of the explanation, then I'm sure you can speak to him personally and we can deal with it at that time.

Mr Wildman: With respect, Mr Jock has been criticized for his unfortunate wording.

Mrs Boyd: It was his wording.

Mr Wildman: I think it's only fair that he have the right to come and make his own explanation and to defend himself.

Mrs Boyd: Hear, hear.

The Chair: Seeing no further debate, all in favour of the motion? Opposed? The motion is defeated.

Mrs McLeod: is this a new point?

Mrs McLeod: Yes, it's a new point. It's not continuing the old debate, although it does flow from it. Since Mr Skarica was not prepared to answer the question of why we are here, I continue to believe that we're here because it's important to hear public submissions and that we're determined to make those public voices heard.

I did have some hope at the end of last week that some of the government members were hearing some of the concerns that were presented and that's what was behind Mr Skarica's motion last week, asking the commission, not yet appointed, to review the board boundaries based on the representations made in northern Ontario.

If Mr Skarica and the Conservative members of this committee believe that this committee's input may have some effect, I would then ask if Mr Skarica would present a motion today to expand his previous motion so that it deals not just with the submissions of northern Ontario but the submissions of all those concerned about the board boundaries.

Mr Skarica: You will find on Wednesday whether or not we listened to the various presentations, and you will find by our amendments that we did.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Skarica, is there any reason not to expand your motion? Why would we deal only with northern Ontario in your motion?

Mr Skarica: Because at that time we were in northern Ontario and had heard the submissions. We're only halfway through here. We heard submissions at that time that we thought were particularly compelling and that's why we —

Mrs McLeod: You're telling me that tomorrow we may hear and have a further motion then?

The Chair: The questions have been asked and Mr Skarica has responded. We are now going to recess until 5 o'clock. I would remind members that lunch is being served in the lounge, which is through the restaurant on your right.

The committee recessed from 1628 to 1708.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL
TEACHERS' FEDERATION,
MIDDLESEX DISTRICT

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, we are back. We are going to start with the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, Middlesex District, Mr LeFeuvre. We welcome you. Thank you very much for being here and for coming on so early as well while we wait for other presenters. We appreciate it.

Mr John LeFeuvre: I was given the agenda this afternoon. I'm a stand-in for Steve Wanamaker. If there's one thing I can't stand, it's somebody who comes in to make a presentation and reads what they have in front of them, but unfortunately that's what you're going to get.

The Middlesex District of the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation represents some 200 male and female elementary teachers working in the employ of the Middlesex County Board of Education. As their representative, I am pleased to be here today to address the serious issues raised by sections of Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, 1997, in particular those aspects of the act which concern our members because of their apparent undemocratic nature.

Middlesex OPSTF is not opposed to amalgamation where the reasons are credible and clearly stated, where there are to be clearly defined and supportable cost savings for ratepayers and where the quality of education and program delivery for any children in the amalgamated boards will not suffer. We do not oppose amalgamation where existing collective agreements are recognized, staff successor rights are protected and the principles of fair collective bargaining with locally elected representatives who have control of the revenue to be raised by the school board are recognized. Such was true in 1969, when the Conservative government of the day enacted the last major round of school board consolidations. However, we do not believe this to be the case today.

We question the government's perceived rationale for proposing the reduction of some 129 elected school boards to a total of 66. By its own studies, which are in some refutation by many local school boards, the government suggests that savings of some \$150 million can be achieved through this consolidation. However, we question whether the massive upheaval that will be generated by such a change is worth what at best can be judged as a minimal financial return.

We also question the potentially unmanageable size of some of the proposed district school boards and the number of children to be served over such a broad area. With reference to the Elgin-London-Middlesex-Oxford consolidation, which goes well beyond the recommendations of the government study, we question how the interests of children in a mainly rural geographic area will be better served by creating the third-largest district school board in Ontario, a board whose estimated student population of 90,000 will surpass that of many Canadian provinces and territories.

The elementary teachers of Middlesex are no strangers to the issues which arise when school boards consider amalgamation. We also know that the potential for cost increases far outweighs any potential savings which may be generated by the so-called economy of scale. In 1993, when the Middlesex and London boards were deeply involved in amalgamation deliberations, the impact was felt throughout the system as board administrators, already reduced in number, were forced to assume additional duties which took away from their administrative time allocated for system and classroom needs.

It was learned in 1993 that the merger of school boards was much more complex than in 1969. The political

cultures and educational programs of boards are much more clearly delineated and entrenched now than they were in the past, and the time to ameliorate differences requires thousands of person-hours which take administrators, principals and teachers away from their classroom and program activities. The blending of such items as staffing policies, staff transfers, transportation routes, school boundaries, secretarial time, release time and trigger figures for principals and vice-principals, and program delivery models for such areas as library services, junior and senior kindergarten, special education and music, just to name a few, will take an inordinate amount of time, energy and dollars.

In the London-Middlesex example we learned that the computerized information systems, both hardware and software, were incompatible and that the cost of merging systems just to create one set of employee records to meet payroll requirements would cost at least \$2 million. The blending of collective agreements is another case in point. In 1969, most agreements were one or two pages in length. Today agreements with fewer than 50 pages are the exception.

In 1993 the overall amalgamation costs were estimated by the two boards, London and Middlesex, to be somewhere in the range of \$17 million. What the cost will be to merge the four boards now planned in Bill 104 is anyone's guess. What is significant is that the Minister of Education and Training of the day, David Cooke, now co-chair designate of the EIC, recognized the need to fund a portion of these costs to assist the boards in coming together. On May 13, 1993, he offered the two boards \$5 million: \$2.7 for amalgamation-related costs — computer information systems — plus another \$2.3 million for extraordinary costs related to amalgamation. Although the offer was rejected by the two boards, Minister Cooke deemed it a fair and realistic offer.

It is also most ironic that the draft agreement to merge the London and Middlesex boards in 1993 was, unlike the current Bill 104, cognizant of the need to recognize successor rights for the employees of the affected boards. In fact, in a May 15, 1993, article in the London Free Press, then-Minister Cooke stated: "We don't want people to lose their jobs because of amalgamation. Over time, there may be a need for fewer positions, but you try to keep people." Bill 104 should be amended to recognize these needs, and not encourage Dave Cooke, in his new role, to recommend outsourcing and the possible layoff of people who have worked a good portion of their adult lives with local boards.

Weeks later Thomas Wells, Minister of Education from 1972 to 1978, was charged by David Cooke to investigate the possibility of merging school boards in the city of Windsor and the county of Essex. In his 1993 report, School Governance in the Windsor-Essex Area, Mr Wells stated: "Amalgamating boards of education holds appeal for those who see this process reducing staff, trustee and administrative costs, and creating other savings through economies of scale...[yet] the key question to be answered is whether amalgamation will save money and improve the quality of education."

In the "Summary of Conclusions" to his report on school governance, August 1993, Mr. Wells stated:

"(1) In the Windsor-Essex area, precedents, analysis, and forecasts indicate that any significant savings from amalgamation would be doubtful.

"(2) From everything I have studied and heard, I concluded that amalgamation of boards is more likely to increase costs than reduce them.

"(3) There is little if any evidence to show that the amalgamation efforts of 1969 saved money. In fact, they probably added to the overall educational costs in the province.

"(4) Special circumstances and the costs involved in the restructuring of boards in the Windsor-Essex area would outweigh the savings and benefits."

The difficulty in addressing the issues inherent in Bill 104 is the sense of uncertainty and confusion created by its lack of critical information. The changes required to functionally amalgamate large employee groups are potentially massive. Only the superficial aspect of it will be in place. If passed in its current form, it will be in place without adequate preparation in the too-limited time frame for implementation. The unknown funding model may raise further complications. Boards will be meaningless as trustees will be unable to carry out any democratically representative functions. There is too much regulatory power over boards, over representation and over nebulous transitional matters in section 7 of the Bill.

Section 10 of the bill overrides all other acts or regulations. A democratic government cannot allow transitional regulations made under the Fewer School Boards Act to override acts passed as legislation.

One major concern of teachers' groups in this process is their employment status, both current and future. Their current employers will have no taxing powers, hence no meaningful control over local education conditions. The bill fails to make any definitive statements on collective agreements, present or pending. This causes apprehension. Indeed it is unclear as to whether or not district school boards named in Bill 104 are by legal definition considered boards of education as defined in the Education Act. If the negotiations process and status of collective agreements are transitional matters, this will likely lead to a court challenge. This of course could be the government's intent to further delude the public into believing that legislation currently in place, Bill 100, is flawed and needs changing.

Successor rights have previously been guaranteed by various sections of the Education Act. There have been precedents for the protection of employees in annexation and amalgamation circumstances. Bill 104 fails to deal with this in terms of currently existing legislation, but even more significantly, fails to clarify if district school boards would be bound to honour the existing collective agreements of predecessor boards. The School Boards and Teachers Collective Negotiations Act has no provisions for any aspect of successor rights. This is unacceptable.

This is further compounded by the confusion in the bill itself. Section 341(1)(e) states that a board shall not enter into any obligation beyond December 31, 1997. You realize, of course, that's in the middle of a contract. Subsection (2)(d) states that this does not apply to the act that currently governs bargaining. Clause (4) gives the

Education Improvement Commission full control over any final budget. Clause (5) states that when the commission acts under (4), then (2) does not apply. Where does this leave any of the parties to an agreement? For whom and under what contractual arrangements are we working on January 1, 1998?

The powers conferred to the commission are too arbitrary in their scope. Despite the fact that committees can be established to assist in the process of making recommendations, the lack of respect for the opinions of any stakeholders affected by the actions of this government thus far does not inspire confidence in the process. It raises the fear that responsible boards will have no way of retaining or spending surpluses raised locally on local education. It is not known if those chosen to serve on committees will be representative of the stakeholders in education. It is not known if the references to outsourcing of non-instructional services will have any connection to the reality of educational services or the philosophy of education espoused by the ministry in past decades.

The chaos that the implementation of this bill could create will far outweigh the mythical financial goals it purports to achieve, with no improvements to education. It is too much, too fast, and with no apparent planning beyond the politically cosmetic transparencies of this government.

Recommendations:

That the new funding model for educational finance and accompanying regulations be released prior to third reading of Bill 104;

That Bill 104 be amended to provide successor rights and legal recognition for all board employees affected by the transition;

That Bill 104 be amended to recognize the legal status of teacher collective agreements during the transition period until new collective agreements are negotiated between the new district school boards and their employees;

That Bill 104 be amended to delete section 335(3)(f) and any other sections directing the Education Improvement Commission to "consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations" regarding the "outsourcing of non-instructional services";

That Bill 104 be amended to allow time for federation-affiliate organization within the new local district school board boundaries prior to the commencement of bargaining for a new collective agreement;

That section 339 and any other relevant clauses of Bill 104 be amended to require that school board employees be included as members of any local committees established by the Education Improvement Commission;

That Bill 104 be amended to allow for locally raised tax dollars and school board reserves to remain with the community of origin;

That the education finance reform regulations allow district school boards to raise up to an additional 10% of their budget through local revenue sources;

That Bill 104 be amended to provide additional funding for the costs of merging the hardware and software of district school board information systems;

That Bill 104 be amended to provide district school boards with adequate time to merge programs and recon-

cile disparate operating policies beyond the January 1, 1998, deadline;

That impact studies on the costs of merging board programs be released prior to third reading of Bill 104;

That Bill 104 be amended to remove section 346, and other sections of the bill which grant the Education Improvement Commission immunity from legal suit, with regard to the legal authority vested in unelected provincial officials to amend fundamental budgetary decisions of school boards.

1720

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much. We appreciate your presentation. Just so it's absolutely clear for the record, the Sweeney school board reduction task force would have recommended that London-Middlesex be amalgamated and Elgin-Oxford be amalgamated, as opposed to the four-board amalgamation that's proposed.

Mr LeFeuvre: That's correct.

Mrs McLeod: Since reference was made earlier to the studies of Mr Sweeney, I think we should make it clear where they differ from the proposals that are now before us.

I want to refer to the concerns you raise about the whole collective bargaining process, at the top of page 7. The brief, in my view, very accurately portrays the sheer confusion and the contradictory nature of the provisions in this bill as they affect the powers of the EIC and its control over board budgets, and apparently anything except collective bargaining, but if you can't control your budget, how do you have any collective bargaining agreements?

There are two questions I would ask you. Are the contracts fully harmonized from the London-Middlesex amalgamation?

Mr LeFeuvre: No.

Mrs McLeod: If not, what happens to all of that now, and how much more difficult will it be to harmonize contracts when boards presumably will have no local funding flexibility because the ministry is controlling 100% of the funds?

Mr LeFeuvre: What happened in the London-Middlesex situation is that our employees went and took with them, as successor rights, any obligations that were in our collective agreement that were not in London's and then simply became members of London for all other purposes of the collective agreement.

In the current circumstance it would probably take a staffing committee about three years to sort out whether or not Middlesex was going to abandon its specialized music program, by which it delivers its preparation time, versus London's, which is delivered partly through French and partly through rotary phys ed in the larger schools; and Elgin has French delivered down to grade 1, but the other two boards have it to grade 4, and two boards have JK but two don't have JK.

In terms of the entire process, it would take probably two years of some type of staff transition period by which to accommodate all the circumstances that would arise out of putting four boards together with four separate collective agreements.

Mrs Boyd: Thank you very much for your presentation. It's very clear and your recommendations are very clear.

One of the real issues is that when unification of the London-Middlesex boards was looked at, and also when Mr Wells looked at Windsor-Essex, the assumption was that you wouldn't go down to the lowest common denominator in terms of working conditions and all other collective agreement things; that if anything, you would regularize up in order to reach the sameness. I think, realistically speaking, the only way this government can hope to save dollars is by going to the lowest common denominator and by destroying the successor rights. Would you agree?

Mr LeFeuvre: I would say that it would be impossible for them to save money in any other manner than to go after the collective agreements of all the teachers in the province, period. I don't think, even if you tried to decide what the lowest common denominator between four boards of education was, the public would allow the dissolution of any one of the services from all the areas. The expectation would be that they would all be provided in all four boards, as opposed to cherry-picking, if you will, if somebody on an EIC thinks they're going to be able to do that. I can't see how this can be sensibly workable at all.

Mr Boyd: So your assumption is that they'll simply go after collective agreements for all employees of all boards, as well as reducing the number of administrators.

Mr LeFeuvre: Yes.

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): John, it's good to see you again. In recommendation 8 you make reference to an additional 10% being allowed to be raised locally. Would it be your viewpoint that this money should be exclusively discretionary or would you recommend that if that was to occur, those moneys be directed to a particular area of the education community?

Mr LeFeuvre: I would think they should be discretionary.

Mr Smith: I know you have a considerable amount of background in the area of statistics generation, hardware and software packages and information systems. In item 9 you recommend that there should be funding to address those areas of concern. Do you have a feel, given your experience from the previous amalgamation and your knowledge of the existing systems, of the time and the estimated costs to bring those systems together?

Mr LeFeuvre: When you look at the package from the two board offices, which you would just more or less call the operating systems of the two, and then you went to look at London's library system, which does not have the computerized setup that Middlesex county had, if I can recall correctly, the cost on that was estimated at somewhere between \$5 million and \$7 million.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr LeFeuvre, for coming and pinch-hitting for Mr Wanamaker. It's been a pleasure to have you.

ONTARIO ENGLISH CATHOLIC
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION,
WINDSOR SECONDARY UNIT

The Chair: I call upon the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, Ray Moreau. Members, you'll find that at 5:25 on the agenda. Thank you very much also, Mr Moreau, for filling in.

Mr Ray Moreau: I'm Ray Moreau. I'm a teacher in Windsor. Sheila wasn't able to make it and she phoned me to take her place.

I am going to say first off that I hope those of you who are from out of town get a chance to see the city. It's a beautiful city. We're extremely proud of it. You don't get to see all the good sides of it from inside this room.

I'm also aware that you people are just about halfway through your day, so I will try not to be too long. But I think it's really important that you recall that those of us sitting over here aren't politicians. We are here really to serve the community we represent. I represent teachers but I'm also a Catholic ratepayer, and I want to speak to you as a Catholic ratepayer, as a Catholic teacher, and as the president of OECTA secondary here in the city of Windsor.

I want you to know that I teach politics to an adult class. All day today there have been my students in this room observing how this system works, because I want them to understand how democracy works. I want them to know that having committee hearings and travelling across this province is important to the democratic process in this province. Four or five of them are still here; there were 22 of them this morning when you started, but there has never been a moment today when some of my students haven't been here watching you. Tomorrow we're going to discuss this process because they really don't know much about most of it. I think it's really important that they see that this works. I've been a political buff all my life, and if this system doesn't work, we're all in big trouble.

I want to remind the committee as well that contrary to what the minister keeps saying, we have one of the best educational systems in the world, bar none, and you cannot compare apples and oranges. I think that's very important whether it goes to the educational standards or it goes to the expenses in meeting the needs of our students. You can't compare Ontario with everybody else in the world. It isn't the same, and you've heard that before.

For those of you on the government side, may I remind you of one of the grand people of this country, whose vision and compromise created the country we live in: Sir John A. Macdonald, Old Tomorrow, one of the founders of the Tory party. He had a vision that he wanted this country to exist. The BNA Act that he ended up with is not what he started out wanting, but he had the skill and the talent to change it so that it worked.

I'm asking you people to do the same thing with Bill 104, because it has no vision; it doesn't tell us anything. It's a very small piece of a puzzle that's extremely complicated, and you've heard that over and over today. I want you to listen to the visions we've had in the past. There is no vision here except cut, cut, cut.

We're open to change. The educational system in this province is one of the best, because the stakeholders in this province, no matter who's the government, have never been satisfied with the status quo. Change is why Ontario has one of the best educational systems in the world. If you don't believe me, just take a poll around the world and you'll find out, contrary to Mr Snobelen's repeated sayings, that he's not telling the true picture.

1730

Not only is there lack of vision. John A. Macdonald also compromised, and I'm going to ask you people to compromise for the good of the educational system that I represent and that we're all here to better, no matter what our political agendas or sides are. That's what we're here for, I hope.

As a teacher of 30 years, I hear a great deal about what's going on in terms of curriculum. We get all these announcements out of Queen's Park, "We're going to do this." So far it's all been for naught. Secondary school reform so far, basically, as a teacher — I've been doing it for 30 years and I'm totally concerned about the students I teach. There isn't anything in there that is positive. We're open to change but we're not really being consulted. We're terrified, to be quite honest with you, that the only thing driving the agenda is saving money. We are not convinced, and we want to be convinced, that the agenda is education, not money saving. That's what concerns us as parents, as teachers and as ratepayers.

We're really concerned as well about equity. One of the reasons we have trustees at a local level, with some power — they don't have any as of January 13 — is to make sure that the disadvantaged children in our system are all equally treated, that no single group of influential people can take away the necessities from disadvantaged people. Local trustees, with whom I've argued for 15 years, I might add, and have taken teachers on strike against, are key to the successful operation of the educational system in this province, and it's been such for 150 years or more.

We're also concerned about the other equity part of the legislation, and that is this outsourcing. If you go into a school — and my office is in an elementary school, although I'm a secondary teacher — the custodian is a part of the staff. When they have a staff luncheon, the custodian goes. So does the secretary. They're all part of the community. You can't take that and sever it. They're part of the community. They know the kids, they care about the kids, and they're committed to the school. There is no price on that. If there is, we're also in big trouble.

The centralization of power at Queen's Park doesn't do anybody any good. Local solutions are the cheapest. My brief goes on and on and on about all the things you've seen across the province where local trustees and local parents and local teachers have come up with solutions in their own areas which nobody, through no fault of their own, can do from the Mowat Block in Toronto. We want local control.

Let me give you an example. If the federal government had the power to take away the taxation right of the provinces and in turn said, "We'll give every provincial government in Canada an equal amount of money per capita," do you think you guys would have any power? I don't think so. When you take away the taxation power from the trustees you basically make them eunuchs. I think that's critically important. Think about that. If you people didn't have the right to tax, what power would you have?

I'm not not convinced, of course, that amalgamation in any way, shape or form is cheaper.

I want you people to know too that unless there are changes to Bill 104 — and I haven't heard any really outstanding applause for it today. If there aren't real amendments to that bill and this committee doesn't do something to address the concerns of the people who come in front of you, then why shouldn't the rest of us — and I'm not one of those but I might become one — be cynical about the political process? If us coming here doesn't mean anything, then for God's sake don't let us come. We come here because we want to make a difference. We want you to hear our concerns.

If it doesn't matter, if Bill 104 is submitted without major amendments, this will all be for naught. I have to convince the students I have, and I'll be using your names tomorrow, very nicely, I might add. If my students don't understand that, why should they believe in the system I want them to be part of? I'm trying to convince them to be part of the system and to run for election and to vote, for God's sake. I don't stress political philosophy or parties. I want them to be involved, but I have to be able to tell them that it means something, so I hope I can.

In my brief, as well — I'm convinced, by the way, that Bill 104 is unconstitutional. We can go on about this part and that part, but in at least three areas I think it's unconstitutional. You will see a letter I wrote to the Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association when they first came out and supported it, and that's fair. Also included is the response from the Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association to me. They are the ones that publicized the documents and I think you should have it as well. My concern as a Catholic ratepayer is that no trustee association — I say this to them and I will say it to you — can take away my right to have Catholic schools. You can't put my rights in abeyance. They can't do that because they don't have the right to do that. The Scott act gives me the right and I want that right. I don't want anyone taking it from me and I will resist it if anyone does. I can't be more clear than that.

I also mention in my letter about social justice, about the people who will be displaced. The response to that is, "We'll do the best we can." If the local separate school boards don't have any money, how can there be social justice in looking after the people who are already there? Without money, you don't have anything. You can talk about social justice, but you know what? Letting people go — what social justice is there in that? There's no protection because they won't have the power to tax. I think they should have that power. I've disagreed with trustees, but it's still the best system, and to do away with it is an abrogation, I believe, of constitutional rights.

I think it's unconstitutional because the EIC is above the law. Everybody in Canada is subject to the law, no matter what your position is. We now have a commission that is above the law. Why would you want to do that in the first place? I want you to know that Dave Cooke and Ann Vanstone don't need that kind of protection. They're quite capable of doing their job and making the tough decisions, without taking away basic rights in this country. They're quite capable. You don't have to give them that power, so don't give it to them.

I'm asking you people, when you make your amendments, number one, we want local control. I don't want to have to phone the Mowat Block. I tried that once for

a deputy minister and nobody knew who the hell he was and I went through the information system. I don't want that. I want to be able to phone the trustees. And you know what? We've solved our problems here and we've created all kinds of things because, sure, we have our differences, but we sure as heck work together on many things too. We're all part of the same community.

I want to make it perfectly clear that although I have disagreed with OSSTA's position, remember that where we all want to be in the Catholic community is the same. OSSTA just happens to trust the government more than we do. The issue here is trust. You know what? I really want to trust you, but you've got to give me something to trust because there's nothing in this legislation except dictatorialness and taking away local control.

The reduction in the number of trustees, to me, is absurd. If you're talking about democracy, you need representation. In my brief, I also ask you to provide information like: Why is this so important? Why do we have to do it right away?

Last, I ask again, as was asked this morning — everybody wants you to slow this down. I'm asking you, as a committee, to recommend that Bill 104 be submitted to the Court of Appeal of Ontario so that I, who can't afford the \$200,000 it would take to take you there, don't have to. What's the rush? If the government is very clear that it is constitutional, they should. David Peterson did it with the extension of funding. He set the precedent before he went to third reading. I'm asking you people to do the same thing. If you believe in it, let the courts say it's legal.

Personally, and I'm not a lawyer, I don't believe it's legal. Some of you may be lawyers, but I'm not. But I've been involved in the educational community for 30 years. I believe in what I do and I believe in government, and I believe in you as representatives. If I can't believe in that, I'm in big trouble, not only as an individual but as a teacher who teaches politics, by the way.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm open to any questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Moreau. You've used up all your time, unfortunately, but may I say that I, for one, would love to be in your class tomorrow when you have this discussion.

Mr Moreau: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Project Ploughshares: Are they in the room? Is Mark Onda here? Brigden Public School council?

Mr Skarica: Brigden Public School council sent me a letter, Madam Chair, addressing to myself but also to the education committee hearing. If I was cute, I could hold it back because it's critical of the government, but as everyone on the committee would agree, I'm not cute, so I will tender it as a submission.

The Chair: In view of the fact that we have a number of presenters who are not here, I propose to call a recess for about 15 minutes. We'll be back at 6.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): Is there anyone here who is on the list?

The Chair: I've called everyone right to 6:20, Mr Johnson, so I think we'd best recess until 6 and trust that they will be here by then.

The committee recessed from 1743 to 1800.

WINDSOR AND DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL, SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Chair: We took a brief recess. We're ready to start. I know that Mr Hertel is in the audience. Mr Hertel, Windsor and District Labour Council, would you be prepared to present? I know you've been waiting. This might be a good time for you to do that. Thank you very much for being here.

To the members, the Windsor and District Labour Council's brief was handed out earlier, so you have it among the papers which are in front of you.

Mr Bert Johnson: What time is this?

The Chair: Mr Hertel is a substitute presenter, but the brief of the Windsor and District Labour Council was distributed earlier today.

Mr Bert Johnson: I didn't see it on the list.

The Chair: No, that's why.

Mrs McLeod: He's substituting.

The Chair: Yes, he's a substitute presenter.

Mr Bert Johnson: Who's he substituting for?

The Chair: We have two or three who have not shown.

Mr Paul Hertel: I thank the committee for its indulgence. I didn't realize this would be so controversial. On behalf of the Windsor and District Labour Council I'm trying to represent one of our committees called the schools and education committee, which represents educational workers and teachers in elementary, secondary and post-secondary organizations and unions which are affiliated with the council.

Our committee at the current time is finding its way into the broad mandate of community concerns in Windsor and Essex county and I wanted to share with you some of our concerns, and they are as follows.

First of all, I've heard already today and I will repeat, our committee is opposed in principle to some of the major components of this bill, especially with regard to school board amalgamations because of the loss of accountability and local democracy, which have been articulated already today, and specifically in our region because of the very informative report of Thomas Wells several years ago.

We also are concerned about the loss of meeting local needs by the fact that the tax power arrangements for local boards have been changed in this bill. From a labour perspective, the content that has been articulated by the CUPE representative today and the SEIU representative today in front of you is reinforced by my presentation. We speak for their concerns in this brief presentation. We believe that this law, if it is passed as is, will affect working conditions under both the Teaching Profession Act and the Ontario Labour Relations Act.

In effect, it guts long and hard-fought-for bargaining rights in this province and we believe it can lead to loss of work, specifically through the concept of outsourcing or privatization. The list of bargaining rights and issues related to bargaining is articulated on page 2 of the handout I gave you, and I just wanted to show you in that list some of the complexities of bargaining rights and issues related to that.

With respect to seniority provisions and staffing transfers, there's an awful lot of complicated stuff, and

the member representing the Middlesex elementary teachers quickly pointed that out in the previous presentation. We are concerned about some of the impacts of collective bargaining in terms of some of the large school board French-language areas that are being proposed. There's a whole area there that is just mind-boggling.

With respect to OLRA members, you've heard through the CUPE and SEIU people some of the proposals they have for amendments to the law as it's currently out, in section 335 and so on, that area. Clearly, successor rights tops the list of our OLRA members, and I wanted to share that with you.

Very specifically, our schools and education committee is asking for the bill, as amended, if it does become amended, to certainly contain provisions to guarantee collective bargaining rights in Ontario. We also support the recommendation for legal definition or advice with respect to some kind of referral process, and that has been articulated by a number of previous speakers as well.

That, in summary, was the brief presentation I wanted to make on behalf of the local district labour council and this particular committee of council. Thank you very much.

Mr Wildman: I'm pleased that you were able to present at short notice. You mentioned Mr Wells, a well-respected former Minister of Education, and his position, in which he said that "in Windsor-Essex, precedence analysis and forecasts indicate that any significant savings from amalgamation would be doubtful," and then he goes on to say that "amalgamation of boards is more likely to increase costs than reduce them" and "special circumstances and costs involved in the restructuring of boards in the Windsor-Essex area would outweigh the savings and benefits."

Considering the opinions of Mr Wells, a very competent and respected politician — I mean that sincerely; I served with him in the Legislature when he was minister — do you have any idea why the government would be proceeding in this way, ignoring the advice of someone with the expertise of Mr Wells?

Mr Hertel: I can't speculate on the government's rationale. I think it would be worth their while to re-read those sections and if there are areas for exemption, then indeed they might want to consider the contents of that report for exemptions from the current legislation.

I think I'm speaking on behalf of all of the schools and all of the community buildings that are representing the people of this area when I can say honestly we're here to promote effective education in all of the schools of our community. I think Wells was on to something. If it ain't broke, why fix it?

Mr Carroll: Thank you, Mr Hertel. You are chair of the schools and education committee?

Mr Hertel: Yes, it's a new committee.

Mr Carroll: I noticed in your brief that you talk exclusively about the workers. You made no reference to anything to do with the quality of education or the students or any of those kinds of things. Are we to take from that that your perspective is solely one of protecting the rights of the workers, as opposed to the benefits of the system for the children?

Mr Hertel: Absolutely not. We believe that education is a critical component in our community. This particular argument is advanced in my brief because it is something which I wasn't sure would be addressed in some of the concerns that were presented by parent councils and so forth. It is part of the larger debate. It is not an exclusive item.

Mr Carroll: In what ways do you think Bill 104 will have a negative impact on the quality of education as it pertains to the students?

Mr Hertel: We've heard a litany of arguments in that area, everything from the question of outsourcing, which could lead to a lowering standard of education in the broad sense. That's a start.

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Mr Skarica: Sir, Mr Wells's recommendations encourage the ministry to change the Education Act and empower boards to reduce the number of trustees and reinstate legislated salary limits for trustees. In fact, that's what this legislation does, but the government is being attacked for doing it. People have indicated that's an attack on democracy. What's your feeling on that recommendation?

Mr Hertel: On which one?

Mr Skarica: The recommendation to reduce trustees and reinstate salary limits.

Mr Hertel: We believe local democracy does work if you have an adequate number of trustees and at the current time we have been satisfied with the representation in this particular area in all of our school boards.

Mr Duncan: Maybe you could tell us a little bit about this new committee of the district labour council and share with us some of the labour council's activities on behalf of young people in this community over the course of the last 50 years.

Mr Hertel: I would say in a very broad way the labour community of Windsor supports athletics. It supports academic excellence throughout the broad community. It speaks out on behalf of a variety of community interests that we associate with the United Way programming. Those are but a few of the ways in which we try to represent the full community.

Mr Duncan: I think specifically of the tens of thousands of dollars you contribute to amateur sport, the tens of thousands of dollars you contribute to education. You built the student centre at the University of Windsor in conjunction with the CAW. I just thought that needed to be put on the record.

Mrs Papatello: Very quickly, your comments regarding the outsourcing, specifically of custodial services in schools, for example: Many of the parents feel very comfortable because the custodian is such an integral part of the school that they actually act as a safety measure for kids, in particular very young children who get to know these individuals on a personal basis. Custodians know when certain kids are expected to arrive, and also look for people who are lingering the hallways who don't belong there.

I wonder if you could give me the reaction of how parents will feel when that work is outsourced and it's really up to a completely private company as to who shows up at St Pius that day to do the cleaning, and what

kind of attachment they could possibly form to the students in that school when there's no control by the principal of that school as to who should show up that day.

Mr Hertel: Parents in this particular community and region are very sensitive to the role of organized labour contributing to the full educational process and I'm sure they would be very concerned if outsourcing led to changes that would depersonalize their neighbourhood and community schools. I'm convinced of that.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Hertel, in particular for jumping into the breach and presenting your brief on such very short notice. The committee is very grateful to you.

Mr Hertel: Thank you for this opportunity.

ROBERT CARBONARO

The Chair: Robert Carbonaro. Thanks very much for coming. Welcome to the committee. You have 15 minutes to present your brief — I'm sorry, 10 minutes. My apologies. You are an individual.

Mr Robert Carbonaro: You scared me there for a second — 15 minutes. I'm a little out of breath because I had to run here from class to make it here.

The Chair: Well, good for you. Just catch your breath. We'll wait.

Mr Carbonaro: I just want to introduce myself. My name is Robert Carbonaro and I'm a fourth-year political science student at the University of Windsor. I've been following the changes in the educational system with some great concern over the years and I just took it upon myself to make a presentation here today and to do some background research into what exactly Bill 104 involves.

I'd like to start by saying that in order to improve the education system a refocusing of resources must take place where they are most needed, that being the individual student and teacher in the classroom, and not the inefficient existing system which currently plagues our education system. That refocusing includes the restructuring of our school boards to make them more cost-effective and accountable to parents, schools and students. That is why I agree that the number of school boards should be reduced from 129 to 66.

Bill 104 is the type of legislation that this province needs in order to put Ontario at the head of the class, a place it deserves and can clearly accomplish if it restructures the system. Reducing the number of school boards is based upon the same premise as reducing the number of MPPs, which will help eliminate unnecessary costs to our education system.

When I was researching this bill and its background information I was shocked to discover that of every \$1 spent on the classroom, 80 cents is spent outside the classroom in some school boards. The 80 cents that is being spent outside the classroom is being spent to help support a school board system that clearly needs change. The status quo is not acceptable.

Bill 104 is a brave and accurate attempt that helps to remedy the challenges Ontario faces from a federal government which, in an effort to reduce its own deficit, has cost billions of dollars in transfer payments which would have helped to fund education in this province.

Upon further research I've discovered that in some cases, particularly in 1996, school board budgets were decreased by just under 2%, yet many school boards increased property taxes by over 3%, which has placed a strain on our communities. Where is the accountability?

Being from Toronto, I have seen where some of the resources which would have been applied to our education and classroom funding have gone. To my disappointment, these resources have previously been wasted upon glamorous buildings which have housed much of the administrative red tape this bill wishes to reduce.

There are many trustees who earn in excess of \$49,000. I have friends who are trustees and I know how hard they work. They do work very hard, but in my opinion reducing this amount to a standard \$5,000 will help to discover who really wants to help out the education standards in the communities by eliminating the huge salary incentive.

I think this bill clearly addresses the fact that our education system really needs change and it needs to be restructured to help address the needs of students, parents and school boards. I think reducing the number will make them more efficient and it also clearly addresses the concerns of both English- and French-language school boards. That is why I'd like to just submit my proposal that this bill will help to address the concerns that I think are very prominent in the education system, from a student who is reaching the climax in his educational career and who has younger siblings who will be facing the new challenges that this province clearly has to address.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Carbonaro. We appreciate having a student. It must be intimidating to come before a committee, and we do appreciate your being here. We have about 10 minutes left for questioning — sorry, about three minutes per caucus, three and a half.

Mr Crozier: He only had 10 minutes to start with.

The Chair: I'm sorry. It's been a very long day. You're quite right. We have five minutes left for questioning in total. With that in mind, Mr Smith.

Mr Smith: Thank you for your presentation. You mentioned that you have a number of friends who are school board trustees. During the course of the submissions this committee has received we've had a great deal of concern expressed that the \$5,000 salary cap will effectively reduce the quality of trustee that one might contemplate would be necessary for education. Given your association with trustees, do you feel that would deter qualified candidates coming forward to serve as trustees?

Mr Carbonaro: No, I don't think it will. There are some students at the University of Windsor who currently serve as trustees. These are people who are involved in the education system right now who are very capable and are hard workers. Their legitimate concerns are in the school system because they wish to serve the school. They are not in it for the amount of money that in some cases school boards pay their trustees. I feel by having a cap at \$5,000 there will be a lot of people who are genuinely concerned about the school system who will come forward because they're clearly aware that it's not

a career salary that you could making a living wage on. I think those people who do come forward are legitimately concerned about the school system and those are the types of trustees I would like representing myself and the people in the school system.

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Mrs Pupatello: I'll just be very brief. Do you consider it a necessity for children in a school to have heating during the winter months in their classroom?

Mr Carbonaro: Yes, of course I do.

Mrs Pupatello: And do you consider it a requirement, in particular early in the morning and later on in the evening, to have light in the classroom in order to teach?

Mr Carbonaro: If you're trying to patronize me, then I would have to agree —

Mrs Pupatello: No, I'm being very serious.

Mr Carbonaro: Then yes, I do.

Mrs Pupatello: Unfortunately, this government has seen fit to call that a non-classroom expense, so I just wanted to show you how ridiculous the definition was. My very quick question before I turn over to the leader: Are you still affiliated with the young PC Party on campus at the university?

Mr Carbonaro: Yes, I am, but what I —

Mrs Pupatello: Thank you.

Mr Carbonaro: What I want to know is, the fact that I am affiliated with the young PCs, does that take away from my right as a student and a citizen to present here?

Mr Wildman: No, not at all.

Mr Duncan: It just explains a lot.

Mrs Pupatello: It just tells me where you got your research.

Mr Carbonaro: The source of my research is the fact that I'm a student and have access to the library.

Interjections.

The Chair: Can you let the young man please respond.

Mr Skarica: On a point of order, Madam Chair: This deputant has given his 10-minute deputation with people talking, committee members talking and then people in the crowd laughing. I just think that's inappropriate. It's intimidating being here. He has his point of view. He has a right to it. I don't think anybody should be disparaged for it.

Mr Wildman: Thank you for your presentation. It is a fact that the government does not count heat and light as classroom expenditures.

Just in terms of your view that passage of the bill and the changes in the numbers of trustees and their remuneration may in fact put funding back into the classroom, I thought I could give you some of the government's figures. Mr Snobelen estimates, and it's been confirmed elsewhere, that \$13.5 billion is spent annually on elementary and secondary education in Ontario. Mr Snobelen says that this bill, if it is passed, will save \$150 million. Now \$150 million is a lot of money, but in comparison to \$13.5 billion it's a little over 1%. So it may be a start, but it's not going to put very much into the classroom. The question is whether or not we should have the disruption that the bill may produce in the education system for the sake of saving a little over 1%.

Mr Carbonaro: Just looking at the general picture of this province, I have to say that whatever can be done to help eliminate the debt that I will inherit, and not the older generation, because I will be paying for it, any effort made to eliminate some of the deficit and debt which I will be forced to pay back I think is a good start for me and for the younger generation.

Mr Wildman: Even if it hurts their education today?

Mr Carbonaro: In my opinion, it does not hurt the education system right now.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Carbonaro. We appreciate your coming forward and giving us your views.

I would like to say to the audience and to the members of the committee that we've had a policy, almost even a tradition with this committee, of hearing everybody out, regardless of their points of view, and I hope that we can continue in that vein for the rest of the hearings.

ST PIUS X PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Chair: May I call upon St Pius X Parent Advisory Committee, Kathy Stevenson. Welcome, Ms Stevenson. Thank you for being here. I notice you have some co-presenters. I would ask you to identify them for the record.

Mrs Kathy Stevenson: For the record, the secretary is Beth Kennette, the vice-chairperson is Denise Dumont and our treasurer is Barb Sakal. I'm the chairperson, Kathy Stevenson.

I am speaking on behalf of the St Pius X Parent Advisory Committee from the town of Tecumseh. I would like to make it clear that we represent no political party; we represent no union. We are here for the matter at hand and that is the children of this province.

Our current student enrolment is 890 children, and we represent 550 families. Our PAC has been active in our school for about 10 years. We started, as many others, by providing hot lunches for our children. In the last four to five years, because of various circumstances, we have been thrown into what our local paper described as "school yard politics."

Mr Cooke has already met us on several occasions, as we were fortunate to have had him as our MPP. It is our opinion that the Education Improvement Commission is now the fortunate one to have him as co-chair. We wish him and the committee luck in their new endeavour.

We appreciate the opportunity to speak to you regarding the future of education in our province under the changes to the Education Act.

Bill 104 will be strengthening the role of parent councils in Ontario. We recognize the importance of parental involvement in our schools and we appreciate that what we have been doing for years will now be legislated by this bill. However, if it is the intention of Bill 104 to replace trustees with parent councils, we caution you. No one has been more discouraged with trustees than us. We have seen trustees in meetings who never say a word and never ask a question. We have sat through three-hour meetings and never heard the word "children" mentioned once.

Our Christian faith has taught us to think of others before ourselves. It is our concern that there will be schools that do not have the parent volunteers to form a council. St Pius and other schools will always have parents who are willing to take on this responsibility. That is the ideal situation, but we know the real world is not always ideal. The real world is full of schools where parents are unaware of what is going on, let alone willing to sit on a council.

The education system in Ontario will become an elitist society, where powerful parent councils will dictate what is best for their schools and other schools will be completely ignored. We fear for the children of those schools, for who will be their voice if there are no trustees.

Reducing the number of trustees is a step in the right direction in cutting costs. But the children of Ontario need a non-partisan voice at the school board level. Not all trustees are as we stated earlier; some are truly committed to improving the quality of education in the classroom. It is our duty as voters to be aware of electoral candidates for school boards and to use our voting power to elect trustees who truly represent all children.

The short title for Bill 104 is the Fewer School Boards Act, 1997. The purpose in reducing the number of school boards in Ontario is to save money at the administration level. We support the reduction only if there will be realized savings, and those savings must remain in the education ministry to be directed back into the classroom.

The pupil-teacher ratio in Ontario is alarmingly high. We address this issue in support of what the teachers have been saying for years because it is the major concern of parents regarding education in our schools today. I recently spoke with a grade 7 elementary teacher and our discussion was about mathematics. She informed me that in her class she has a child who is at a grade 10 level in math and she has another child who is at the primary level. In a classroom of 30 children, the child who excels is not being challenged and the child who has fallen behind will never catch up because the 28 students in between must be taught to ensure progression at their level.

In each classroom you have students at either end of the spectrum: those who are advanced and those who need extra help. The larger the class size gets, the more difficult it is for teachers to address the needs of the children at each end of this spectrum.

Our PAC obtained bingo licences and started to run bingos to raise funds for our school about five years ago. It was our intention as parents to use this money to buy extras for our children. With our bingo money, we converted a field of weeds into a physical and recreational area for the students, including all the requirements of a track and athletic field.

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The days of purchasing perks for our children are long gone. We now work bingos to the early hours of the morning to provide our children with the most basic necessities, such as classroom textbooks and resource materials. Fifteen years ago, I was preparing for the birth of my first child, and if you had told me then that as a parent I would be working all-night bingos to provide a history book for my child, I would have thought you

were crazy. But that is exactly what I and many other parents in this province are doing today.

In the last two years, the parents of St Pius have put more money into our classrooms than our school board did. The reason? We are a Catholic school in a rural district — an assessment-poor board. The proposed restructuring of how school boards are funded must be done for the purpose of providing all children in Ontario with an equal opportunity for education. English, French, separate and public boards must all have resources equal to each other. A child in Tecumseh or Timmins must be given the same educational tools as those children in Ottawa or Toronto. The wealth of their municipalities should not be a factor in who gets books and who doesn't.

Chances are that a child growing up on a dairy farm in Norwood will not remain there as a adult. If his goal is to be a financial adviser on Bay Street, it is your responsibility to give him the opportunity to achieve his dream. It is not up to which PAC can get the best bingo dates and times. We are all aging baby-boomers and those 2 am bingos are starting to hurt.

The main goal of any education system is to prepare children to function as optimally as possible as adults. Children today have a wide range of needs. This includes exceptional children, children with special needs, children from dysfunctional families, children with attention deficit disorder, and all these children come from a vast array of socioeconomic backgrounds. Your decisions have far-reaching implications for all these children.

To quote John Snobelen, "As part of our commitment to move students to the head of the class, we will focus our resources where they belong — on the individual student and teacher in the classroom." The St Pius Parent Advisory Committee endorses this commitment, with expectations that you use your wisdom and integrity to make this a reality. The children you represent are all Ontarians and their success will be the future success of this province.

Mr Duncan: Thank you for your presentation. I guess the only question I have revolves around notionally, you were saying, the idea of a student in Timmins or Tecumseh having access to a comparable education. Do you believe that if we centralize funding, people in this part of the province can truly rely on the government of Ontario, and I mean political persuasions aside — are you comfortable leaving those decisions to a body in Toronto versus local decision-making?

Mrs Stevenson: We've seen what the local decision-making has done for our board and we're not very happy with it.

Mr Duncan: Let's take health care and the underfunding of our hospitals, for instance, which is done —

Mrs Stevenson: That's not what we're here to speak about this evening.

Mr Duncan: No, I understand that, but the question is, again, locally you're not satisfied with the decisions that have been made with respect to levels of funding. Are you going to be more comfortable with those decisions being made in Toronto by the Ministry of Education and Training?

Mrs Stevenson: If it works, yes. That is why we are here telling people what will make it work, what we see are the problems. The funding is for you guys to figure out.

Mr Duncan: Again, though, the question is the local boards making decisions with respect to funding. What this bill will do, in effect, is take away all taxation power from the local level and have Toronto make the decisions. That argument's been put and I think it's a very compelling argument. I'm a little bit nervous about that because historically it's been the small rural areas, particularly in this part of the province, that have been overlooked and underfunded in the areas of education and health care. I flag you to that concern because I understand where you're coming from in terms of your own frustration, because those frustrations I think are felt all over the province, but I'm personally very leery about trusting some official at the Mowat Block in Toronto to make those decisions for us.

Mrs Stevenson: If Toronto decides that this is the history book that every child in grade 7 gets, then that's fine with us. What we're saying is that we can't not be getting the same resources as other children in the rest of the province.

Mrs Boyd: Thank you very much for your presentation, and I sure feel for you in terms of the bingos. I agree it is a bit much. I think you are like many parents who just never expected that their obligations to their children, which they welcome when they decide to have those children, would entail raising the basic cost of their children's education. I guess our fear is that more and more that is what may happen.

You speak from the position of an assessment-poor board and you talk about what will happen to those children who don't have parents who are able to contribute as you can, and that's my worry too. But I have an additional worry, and that is the assumption, certainly of your trustee association, that the amount of funding for assessment-poor Catholic boards will rise when equality of grants is achieved across the province. There are a couple of problems with that.

Number one, that was a recommendation of the Crombie commission. We haven't had a confirmation that that is what the government is going to do. Number two, we have no commitment that in fact the actual base-per-child funding that happens in your board or any other board is not going to go down as that money gets less and is spread very thinly across the province.

If that were to happen, would you be as enthusiastic about this equity at a much lower level, or are you assuming that equity would bring you up to the higher level that many other boards have enjoyed? You're quite right about that.

Mrs Stevenson: That is what we're assuming, that it will bring us up.

Mrs Boyd: I think you know that they want to take \$1 billion out of the schools, out of funding schools. You need to be really aware of that. We believe that having faith that this is going to bring you up to a higher level may be misplaced faith.

Mrs Stevenson: I thought the purpose of this was for us to be able to come and speak and give our ideas and

our sides, and not for you to speak back to us about what you feel or throw your opinions on us. This is how we feel.

The Chair: In fairness, Mrs Stevenson, the members can use their time in any way they want once it's turned over to the individual caucuses.

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): I think you're to be commended for your effort.

You state that you represent about 550 families, so I guess that would be plus or minus 1,100 parents. How many of those would actively participate in the PAC at your school?

Mrs Stevenson: We are very fortunate that we have a large pool obviously to draw children out of.

Ms Denise Dumont: In terms of monthly meetings or people who participate in bingos?

Mr Pettit: Yes; whatever. Would it be 10%, 50%?

Mrs Stevenson: We have an appreciation night at the end of the year for all the parent volunteers, and I think last year there were 125.

Mr Pettit: So about 10%. It's been my experience with my own kids at their school that there's not a great amount of parental involvement. Is this a sign that they're content or they don't care? Why do you think there's so much apathy from the parents' point of view in terms of whether it be Home and School or PACs?

Mrs Stevenson: I think it's the times. It's the society we live in today. We have a lot of single-parent families that work all day and in the evening they have their other roles. They have laundry to do, they have to supervise the homework and that. Every parent can't volunteer their time. They don't have free time.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs Stevenson, and all of your colleagues for being here today and presenting your views. We appreciate it.

1840

KAREN SPENCER-GIBBS

The Chair: Karen Spencer-Gibbs. Good evening, Mrs Spencer-Gibbs. Welcome to our committee.

Mrs Karen Spencer-Gibbs: I'd like to welcome everybody to Windsor. I hope you enjoy our great city for the brief period that you will be here. I'd like to thank my MPP, Dwight Duncan, for supplying me with Bill 104, which I couldn't afford to purchase by myself. Excuse me, but I have six kids. I'd suggest that any further bills should be typed on the Ontario legislative channel, along with all ministries, MPPs and how to contact them. What's the big secret anyway?

I tried to contact the Ministry of Education and Training. Once I was through the busy signal, I was put on hold for approximately 22 minutes to speak to a fellow human. This is unacceptable. If I was at work, I would have been using six minutes of my employer's time to speak with the ministry, and I'm sure my employer would not find that very enlightening. If this is a preview to the kind of service for the public once this bill passes, I'm quite upset. To compound matters, a Tory MPP from Bruce-Grey, Mr Murdoch, proposes to eliminate voice mail. No problem, but make sure that you have enough employees to answer that phone so I don't have to wait again.

The Ontario government wants to take over education. Let me give you some insight, because insight is something that I'm going to divulge to you through my experience, as hindsight is 20-20. So we want the insight tonight, just on a few of the issues you'll be dealing with.

Many schools have significant historical value. Question: Will this bill include a guarantee to designate under the Ontario Heritage Act if a community chooses a school to designate?

Many schools are not handicap-accessible. Question: Will this bill guarantee more handicap-accessible schools?

Many schools in the area have low lot grades or have inadequate yard drainage, which results in standing water in school grounds. Question: Is this bill prepared to comply with municipal bylaws? In Windsor, this bylaw is 7373, which is a regulatory bylaw that empowers inspectors to issue orders to fill up and drain grounds, which include school yards and vacant lots. Is this bill prepared to comply with our municipality and others across Ontario?

Some schools have asbestos and lead pipes. Question: Why doesn't this bill address these hazards or other potential hazards? This bill doesn't include a contingency plan for any of these potential hazards and where that particular school's population would be educated while they're handling this; hopefully it would be expedient.

This bill also does not address boards that are debentured up to their eyebrows. Question: How are these debt matters going to be handled, and why is this not stated in this bill? Question: Why is the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations not included in the sections referring to parent councils? Why has this bill shunned some 80 years of experience in educational issues in Ontario? These are the original parent volunteers, yet they're not mentioned in this bill. They've shunned them. Why? Personally, I find this appalling and a slap in the face for these dedicated volunteers.

Home and school association members carry their own insurance for their activities. Question: Why hasn't this bill mandated parent councils to carry insurance for their parent councils and left the general public open to litigation, financial onus?

This bill does not address corporate or private sponsorships, which is the thing to do in schools today, nor guidelines as to what is acceptable or deniable. Why have you not addressed this? This bill doesn't address fund-raising guidelines. A potential for loss in grant money may occur if a group is an avid fund-raiser.

There was recently a case in the media where a teacher went bankrupt twice in one year yet was allowed to hold \$22,000 of parents' money to be used for a foreign exchange program. The Ottawa Board of Education had to agree to repay this teacher's mismanagement and will be deducting from the teacher's paycheque over an extended period of time. This teacher is 58 years old. Talk about job security.

Question: Why did this bill not include fund-raising guidelines and expose Ontario taxpayers to such potential financial risk?

My main concern today is special-needs students. I've done a little research and I find that there's an allotted sum to each student. The respective boards pool this

money in a general fund and attempt to satisfy the needs of the students in their jurisdiction. But through better prenatal care and hospital methods, a larger percentage of high- and multiple-needs children is surviving, even more so than just 10 or 15 years ago. This relates to higher education costs.

As of October 31, 1996, the Windsor Board of Education has 1,013 identified special-needs children. This number is expected to increase. We have children on the waiting list to be assessed and others who are ready to enter the school system. Special needs should have a divided grant system, which should be addressed in this bill, to cover the cost of individual assessed special needs. If special needs children transfer to another board, so should the grant go with them proportionally. It should have to be proven that special services are being administered through documentation and annual audits. Question: Who will be responsible for the special-needs children and their issues?

With the proposed merging of the boards, costs will go up. Transportation is the first thing that came to my mind because my children are now eligible to go to a county school and vice versa.

Bill 26 has given the municipalities a chance to charge user fees. Public transportation is being proposed to be financed by municipalities. Therefore, the municipalities in turn can charge education for special-needs transportation. How about secondary school kids' bus fees? If we're going to pay for our Transit Windsor, surely you don't think Windsor is going to give the government free haul on the bus systems. The joke of the matter is that the Tory government actually gave us these powers.

If and when Bill 104 is passed, the Ministry of Education and Training will have to get financing and deal with other ministries like social services, health, citizenship, municipal affairs, Attorney General, labour, transportation and finance; if I forgot anybody, I'm sorry. Therefore, if Bill 104 becomes law, the Ontario government must enact the ministry of the child within 30 days. This way Ontario taxpayers would be ensured that their children would not be lost in a paper pyramid of different ministries and delays and finger-pointings and, "This one is not doing his job." The intent of Bill 104 was to save money. Let's ensure it does.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation, Mrs. Spencer-Gibbs. You have just about used up your time. We thank you very much for coming and expressing your views so frankly.

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CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES, LOCAL 1150

The Chair: CUPE 1150, Judith Callahan. Welcome, Ms. Callahan. I would ask you to present your co-presenter for the record.

Ms. Judith Callahan: My co-presenter this evening, ladies and gentlemen, is Donna Roden. Donna is the president of Local 1753 with the Middlesex County Board of Education.

My name is Judith Callahan, and I am the president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 1150.

Members of CUPE Local 1150 are employed by the Board of Education for the City of London as office and clerical staff, library assistants, educational assistants, speech and language assistants and health care assistants. We work not only in the schools but in many administrative support roles throughout our board. My 600 members are extremely proud of the fact that we are the very necessary liaison between the numerous aspects of our school system and our community. We have happily undertaken this role for 30 years.

The proposed language in Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, will seriously impact Ontario's education structure as we know it today. My primary goal this evening is to convince you to make what we strongly believe are very necessary amendments to the extremely intrusive proposed bill prior to its receiving royal assent.

In the packages that you have been provided with, you will find many pieces of information. Let me quickly identify some of them, and I would ask that you review each of them in detail at your convenience. It is the hope of my membership that after listening to my presentation and subsequently reviewing each submission to your committee, you will have been convinced to make amendments to Bill 104 in areas such as the ones we identify.

The first item you will find is a pamphlet entitled *Help Us Save Our Schools*. This pamphlet identifies the concerns CUPE has with proposed education restructuring and what the possible effects will be. The second item is a pamphlet entitled *The Power to Care is in Your Hands*. This pamphlet, I'm quite proud to say, was published by my members and distributed throughout London in an attempt to increase the public's awareness of the important role played by us in their children's education. This pamphlet, together with pamphlets and advertisements sponsored by CUPE Locals 190, 982, both of the London board; 1753 and 1170 of the Middlesex board; 1791 and 332 of the Elgin county board; and 3581 of the Oxford county board, was prepared with one key goal in mind. That goal was to inform the public of the extremely valuable services CUPE members provide and how seriously not only we would be affected, but in turn, how the children of the province will be negatively impacted by Bill 104.

It will become evident after reading these inserts that support staff, or, as we have been identified in Bill 104, "non-instructional staff," in our proposed district school board, have already taken great strides towards coordinating efforts. This was not the result of Mr Snobelen's announcement. We are extremely fortunate that the office and clerical staff for all four boards have been organized by CUPE and that CUPE also represents educational assistants in three of those boards. Donna and I have also had previous experience with merging employee groups when schools which formerly fell under the jurisdiction of her board were annexed into the greater London area in 1993. The coordination of the four boards has resulted in our being able to make great gains towards a common goal. The exercise we undertook as the result of the announcements surrounding Bill 104 culminated in a common message from the employees of the proposed amalgamated Elgin county, city of London,

Middlesex county and Oxford county boards of education, or as we have been fondly referred to, the ELMO board of education.

Our common message is that the education system currently has the best service providers holding together the education system in Ontario, and might I add that we do so at a very economical rate of pay. The average CUPE members in Ontario support their families on a salary of \$24,000 per year. We are definitely not the "fat" which should be cut from education.

Now let's do what we are here for. Let's address Bill 104. We have grave concerns about the language in this bill. Let me acknowledge that as taxpayers we recognize that some, and I emphasize "some," of the concepts identified in this bill are long past overdue, and we absolutely recognize the need for change, but not just change for the sake of change. We embrace change as not only a learning experience but as a fact of life. However, there are a few issues in this proposed legislation that we absolutely cannot accept if they are passed in their current format.

First and foremost, let me share with you our concerns about the Education Improvement Commission as identified in section 334. It is indicated in section 335(2) that "the Education Improvement Commission shall oversee the transition to the new system of education governance in Ontario." We don't disagree with this concept if the new system is a better one. However, we don't believe this will be the case. We have serious doubts. In particular, we are concerned with the magnitude of powers granted to the EIC.

Our concerns arise from the following sections: section 335(3), clauses (e), (f), (g), and (h). The broad powers this commission has been granted under these sections, together with other sections we have not identified, are above and beyond any power ever witnessed in the history of this province. The ridiculous idea that a few appointed individuals, not elected representatives, should be allowed to make decisions which could so drastically affect our education system, and ultimately the quality of education in our province with just the stroke of a pen, has created turmoil and extremely high anxiety levels throughout our communities.

The perception is that the EIC has unlimited powers. Unfortunately, this perception has been confirmed. Actually, it has been guaranteed through the language in section 344(2). You have provided the EIC with the ability to make decisions without any challenge. In fact section 346(1)(a), guarantees them unlimited protection from liability. When did our province become subject to a dictatorship rather than a democracy? Mr Cooke has been quoted as saying that he has accepted his role to "guarantee the protection of the taxpayer." What about protecting the interests of the children of this province? May I remind you that they are the future taxpayers.

The provisions allowing the EIC such unlimited power should be amended immediately. Let me make myself clear, though: We are not suggesting that you place language in Bill 104 that will guarantee this group of appointed individuals the powers that are currently hinted at. We would recommend that the mandate of the EIC be clearly identified, with consideration being given to the

many concerns surrounding the structure that have been brought to your attention through the numerous submissions your committee will receive.

As well, when making amendments to these sections of the bill, which I might add are absolutely required, please keep in mind the people you represent and the children who ultimately will be affected. We truly believe that less government may not be better if less government is what has been proposed as the Education Improvement Commission. Actually, we don't see any improvements to education if this commission is put in place.

Specifically under section 335(3)(e), we believe that we should be allowed, as employees, to jointly review our collective agreements with the administration of the proposed district school board and discuss what would be advantageous to all concerned, keeping in mind the key issue: quality service to the students of this province. We are not proposing the sky as the limit, but give us some framework to stay within. Identify which issues we can and cannot negotiate but always keep in mind the current legislation entitled the Ontario Labour Relations Act.

We have been extremely responsible, not only during past contract negotiations with our employer but by participating in review committees, with the goal being the betterment of education for our board. I have included in your package a copy of a submission made by my members to the London board of education during last year's preliminary budget deliberations. Please trust us to continue acting in this responsible manner for the future and allow us to maintain a quality of life that not only benefits ourselves but our community. Many members of CUPE 1150 and many other locals throughout this province give back to their communities and many organizations in very positive ways.

As indicated in section 335(3)(f), it is quite evident that the government believes that outsourcing of our positions will provide advantages to your new education system. We strongly disagree. We provide a pretty good bang for your buck. As Linda Clancy, our national representative, has indicated in her letter, which is also included in your package, "The education of our children is not a cheap commodity that is open to the lowest bidder."

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As educational assistants we come to our jobs with practical skills gleaned from many life experiences. We are a diverse group, with high educational qualifications, who provide a very necessary service. We become the second pair of hands and eyes in the classroom, and let me assure you we do not spend our day cutting and pasting and toileting children. Please refer to the letters I have included for you, one from Linda Hardy and one from Virginia Dahms, both members of our local, both educational assistants and both quite proud of that fact. Educational assistants significantly enhance the program set in place by the teachers in many, many ways.

School secretaries provide a vital link between the children we service and the community at large. This cannot become more evident or be more eloquently stated than in the letter written by Morag Watt, a fellow CUPE member. Morag summed it up perfectly. When reading her letter, which is included in this package with her

blessing, I hope you will recognize that this service is one of the many non-instructional services you have referred to in this bill. The loss of members performing this role will detrimentally impact education in our province. Stephen Thompson, an appreciative parent, sums up the benefits of service providers such as Morag in three little words: "Thanks, Mrs Watt."

CUPE members are not only secretaries and educational assistants, though. They are the men and women your children know as the custodians who provide a clean school for your children, the highly skilled maintenance workers who keep your children's schools safe and running, the warehouse staff who deliver the many school supplies that allow your children's schools to function efficiently and the dedicated administrative support staff who work in areas such as finance, information services, payroll, printing services, purchasing and many others. Support staff, whether they are located in the schools, the school offices, the classrooms or the administrative buildings, are an integral part of the whole school family. If your children lose any of these support staff, the finely tuned educational machine they are accustomed to could grind to a halt. What future are you offering the children of Ontario?

We strongly believe that outsourcing is definitely not the direction your government should be heading in. Some government representatives suggest that we are paranoid and scaremongering to further our position on the issue of outsourcing. How so, when it is clearly written in section 335(3)(f)? This clause must be immediately eliminated from the proposed bill.

As well, section 340(2)(a) allows the EIC the ability to establish guidelines relating to appointments, hiring and promotion throughout Ontario. Are they able to see all from their Toronto offices when it comes to the staffing elements of each and every district school board? We highly doubt it. Talk about overriding collective agreements. We are disgusted with this suggestion. We have maintained responsible language in our collective agreements and will continue to do so if allowed the opportunity. Remove this clause or identify the parameters that we will be required to stay within during negotiations with our employers, whoever they may happen to be.

With reference to section 335(3), clauses (g) and (h), we agree that school councils could be strengthened and should be strengthened, but only if their mandate is clearly identified. We absolutely disagree, however, with increased parental involvement in education governance. Under these two sections, the most influential and outspoken parents will be guaranteed quality education for their children. The children of the parents who do not have the ability to effectively voice their opinion or the ability to provide financial support to their school community will be left far behind. Are only the privileged and wealthy to have access to quality education? Are parents who volunteer their time capable of making decisions relative to staffing issues, curriculum issues or financial issues? We don't believe so. In actuality, as a parent I would not feel capable of making those types of decisions for the benefit of all students at my children's schools. Don't put legislation in place that will allow for a "have" and "have-not" education structure. We have

enough perceived "haves" and "have-nots" in our society without providing language to promote this.

In conclusion, let me provide you with some food for thought by offering some parallels. Would a surgeon perform an operation without the services of an anaesthesiologist? Not very effectively. My members are the anaesthesiologists of the education system that is currently in place. Our concern is that the government has placed a new roof on our house without providing an adequate foundation. Please reconsider the language in Bill 104 and implement a much-needed solid foundation by making the amendments we have suggested this evening.

The education system in Ontario has been built on a strong foundation in the past, and this is what our education system must continue to stand on for the future. The future of our education and the future of our children now lie in your hands. Please don't diminish the quality of education in this province by approving the language currently in place in Bill 104 and subsequently removing the possibility of a promising educational future for the children of Ontario.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Callahan and Ms Roden. Unfortunately, there's never enough time for presentation, and we regret that that is the case. Thank you for being here.

La Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne, Gabrielle Larocque. Is Gabrielle Larocque here? Is Steve Bauer here? Amy Elkardri? We called her before and she wasn't here. The Progressive Conservative Youth Association? They're not here.

HARROW JUNIOR SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Chair: I believe the Harrow Junior School Advisory Council is here, June De Vries. Thank you very much for being here. We're delighted to have you here, and in particular Mr Crozier, who has been waiting for you all day.

Mrs June De Vries: I thank you for letting me present. When I first contacted the government, it wasn't to appear before this board. I thought I was just contacting the government to receive a copy of Bill 104.

The calendar on the wall says it's March 24, 1997, but with this Bill 104 and many other changes the government wants to make to education, the calendar should be showing March 24, 1900. I feel that we are moving back in time instead of moving forward with the computer age.

I am a resident of Essex county and live in a community of 2,600-plus parents and children. I am concerned for the youth of our community schools, Harrow Junior, Harrow Senior, Harrow District High and St Anthony separate school.

Before I go any further, there is one thing, and only one thing that I agree with this government on, and that is to put a cap on expenses such as the amount an elected official is allowed to make, but I do feel that this and further governments have to look at themselves first and do something: spring housecleaning.

Let's start at the top of the political ladder and work our way down. Why start at the bottom and work our way up? Does the politician sitting in Toronto or Ottawa really need the government pension for serving six years

representing their home town or county? As my three-and-a-half-year-old would say, "I don't think so, mom." I know for a fact you don't. You don't need it at all. You can go back to the jobs you had prior.

Why can't politicians pay into a regular Canada pension plan just like the rest of us working people? By deleting this pension, I am wondering whether or not the federal and provincial governments would be able to save enough money to provide proper funding in Ontario so we could keep preparation time, libraries in our schools, guidance counsellors, professional support staff, custodial and maintenance workers, in-school administration, instructional supervision and support staff, secretaries, who really care about their schools and our schools. I would like to keep the high standard of education where it is so that my children and others can be proud to be a Canadian.

Back to Bill 104. As parents of four children ranging in age from three and a half years to 12, my husband and I feel that unless we have the almighty dollars, our children and others like them in our situation are not going to receive the education they are entitled to. It is my understanding that high school will be four years or you're out. Is this true? If so, what's going to happen to the students who may not be able to get the course credits for their grade 12 diploma in those four years? Will the parents have to pay? It's hard enough to keep money in the bank account so they can attend college and university. Now you're asking us to pay for high school education? No. Not this parent.

I am the chairperson of the Harrow Junior School Advisory Council, and I was appalled that the government spent money on a report by Ernst and Young stating that the classroom consists of a teacher, a supply teacher or teacher assistant and, last but not least, classroom supplies such as textbooks and classroom computers. To me, this sounds like a one-room school house that my brothers and sister attended up until 1964.

1910

I feel the next thing the government is going to tell us is that to save even more money, all classrooms will have to be outfitted with a television and all schools with a satellite dish. Why? So the students may be taught by a teacher in Toronto. Not in my time. Children need role models. Teachers, principals and other support staff of the schools are still these role models for our children of today.

Can you really justify the reasoning behind the government taking education mill rate off the property taxes and saying that the money will come from Toronto? How is this when we keep hearing that there is no money? My conclusion to this statement, or thought, is that the government wants to hold the purse-strings. Why? How can you make decisions in Toronto for towns such as Harrow, Kingsville, Essex and many others in Ontario when you don't even have the foggiest idea of what our local needs are? Our needs in Essex county are not the same as needs in London, Kitchener-Waterloo, Toronto or even Kingston, even though the students' needs are the same.

We have to keep the school dollars at the local level to provide the needs for local students. I get the feeling the Tory government does not trust local school boards with

the distribution of funds. All through the bill I am reading, the boards have to submit for the 1997-98 school year a monthly budget; 14 days after the month's end, they have to submit the amount that they actually used or will be using. What's going to happen? Is the government going to say, "You didn't use your full amount that you allotted for the month, so we're only going to bring up the difference of what you have left over for the next month"? This can't happen, because each month is different.

Over the last few months I have been listening to many parents, teachers, principals and students who are very concerned over Bill 104. First of all, the government mandated that all schools must have school advisory councils. Why? We are waiting on the answers.

Then on January 13, 1997, we hear that there will be fewer school boards with fewer trustees. With fewer trustees, who will be taking on the workload of making decisions that school boards and trustees are making now? How are these trustees to carry on a rapport with the parents they represent? In small-town Ontario, the family names don't change very often. In most areas they're working on the fifth or sixth generation of the same family name. When a strange or unfamiliar name comes around, people aren't as willing to open up and talk about their problems with a stranger. Parents and community members are not willing to discuss matters with an individual from another town or community if they don't know anything about this person. Then what? Who will the parents be able to turn to in certain situations?

Why change something that is working? Why stir up trouble, or is this where school advisory councils come into play as a mediator? I'm not one to be a mediator yet.

From students — high school students mainly, because the younger ones aren't affected yet, but I have a 12-year-old who is concerned about her schooling — I've been hearing the following: "If there's no funding for our school library, where do we research that history project, that science assignment or Mr Smith's geography project?" I know in rural Ontario we just don't have access to public transportation. You can't hop on the bus or call a taxi, not like in the urban centres. Most families have one vehicle, maybe two, but with both parents working to support the family in most cases, the car isn't there. How does that student, even if they have a licence, get to the local library? It's kind of hard. Most families nowadays have computers, but do they always have the best information at arm's reach? Maybe; maybe not.

If guidance counsellors are classified as outside the classroom, who is going to help students with their educational choices so that they will achieve their goals? These dedicated people help the students make the proper career choice backed up with proper high school courses, but I feel in today's society guidance counsellors should be taken down to the elementary school level. Students, parents, teachers and guidance counsellors should be coming up with a number of career choices so that students can fall back on these, because it's too late in grades 10 and 11 nowadays, unlike when I was in school. It wasn't until grades 10 and 11 that we started making our career choices.

Teachers and principals feel like they're walking on a minefield when it comes to their jobs. With the merger of two or more boards, there's going to be excess staff. Where are these staff members going to go? To the unemployment line? I don't think so. Mike Harris has already said he doesn't want anybody out there without a job. What about the secretaries who are working in the board office on a daily basis now? At least half of these won't be needed with the merger. Where are they going to go? You get the picture? Down into the school to bump another secretary out of her job, and where is she going to go? This is really going to help the workforce out there. What happened to "Create jobs," Mike Harris? All I can say is the Tory government is killing jobs.

As for privatizing custodial and maintenance and secretarial workers, I really feel the person who came up with this idea must have been asleep on the job. As a parent of children in the school system and with the world like it is today, someone will have to do a lot of talking before I jump on this bandwagon. Why? First of all, the safety factors: Can any one of this committee guarantee me that all people who will be working for private companies cleaning my school will have a police check done and will be able to be around my children for the safety of them? Look at all the kidnappings, physical assaults and other incidents that happen to children because of their innocence. No, thanks. Why try to change things that aren't broken? I feel this is Mike Harris's way of breaking the unions in the public sector. 1920

As for the secretaries, I would rather have someone from my own community. Why? Because once again, the safety factor comes into play. Will there be police checks done on these people? Maybe; maybe not. The safety of my children and the children of the school comes first.

Let me give you an example of a dedicated secretary. This story is true. It took place in February. A grade 1 student at our local school told her teacher that she wasn't to take the bus home. At our school, without a note from the parent stating reasons why the child is not to take the bus home, that student has to take the bus.

The parents could not be reached, the family was changing babysitters at the time and the school didn't know this, so the child was sent home. It wasn't until a frantic phone call came to the school secretary, explaining the situation. Then the ball was rolling. The principal received instructions because she doesn't know Harrow or Colchester South, so she received instructions from our secretary on how to get to the child's home.

The principal then drove to the home, picked up the child, delivered the child to the babysitter's, instructions were then changed on the child's records at school and everything worked out fine at the end.

I feel that if there had been a secretary in the school who didn't know the area or didn't care about the child or didn't even have a police check done and we didn't know where she was from, this story would have ended up on a different note. Thank goodness for having local people working in our schools who know the students' families and care about their school.

One again I ask the question: Why change things that aren't broke? One question I do have to ask, and that is:

Why can't a politician give a direct answer to a question? Why do politicians answer a question in circles, and why can't everyone receive the same information regarding subjects that deal with the public? School boards, principals, teachers' federations and school advisory councils are all receiving different materials on this Bill 104. Why?

On page 20 of Bill 104, section 338(2), a few of us in Essex county would like to know if it would be possible for school advisory council people to sit on some of these committees. I would like that addressed later.

Could you also elaborate on the roles of school advisory councils: Are we heading in the direction of the United States, that each school or school district will be governing itself, what curriculum it wants to use, supplying the needs outside the classroom, evaluating teachers, principals etc? Is this what we have to look forward to? And if so, why?

We are just parent volunteers who want to make the school a better place for our children to learn. Is this Mike Harris's way of saving money: use volunteers who will not be paid? My children come first. I don't know about yours.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Callahan. We appreciate your presentation. You've used up all your time.

Mrs De Vries: It's De Vries.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mrs De Vries. It is been a very long day. My apologies. It's one of the hazards of changing order in the schedule.

FÉDÉRATION DE LA JEUNESSE FRANCO-ONTARIENNE

La Présidente : La Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne ; Gabrielle Larocque. Bonsoir. Bienvenue à notre comité. C'est un plaisir de vous avoir avec nous.

Mlle Gabrielle Larocque : Bonjour. Je m'appelle Gabrielle Larocque. Je suis la présidente de la Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne. Je suis aussi une étudiante au niveau secondaire. Je suis en CPO à l'école secondaire L'Essor ici à Windsor.

La FESFO et la communauté franco-ontarienne se réjouissent vraiment de l'obtention de la gestion scolaire. Ça fait très longtemps, ça fait des années qu'on lutte pour cette cause, donc l'annonce nous a été très bien accueillie. La création de 11 conseils scolaires de langue française assume finalement les obligations de la Charte des droits et des libertés.

Nous, la FESFO, appuyons le projet de loi 104 avec tout l'espoir nécessaire, malgré le territoire vaste que représenteront les sept conseils scolaires de langue française catholiques et les quatre conseils scolaires de langue française publics. Nous sommes prêts à poser tous les gestes nécessaires pour rassurer une bonne transition.

Nous croyons qu'il est très important que les jeunes francophones soient impliqués dans le processus de la gestion scolaire. Évidemment, ce sont les jeunes qui vivent concrètement les changements, et souvent on pense qu'on est juste des jeunes adolescents, qu'on va à l'école, qu'on ne se mêle pas de tous les changements qui se passent dernièrement, mais ce n'est vraiment pas ça à

l'école. Je pense qu'on a beaucoup à dire, puis on peut beaucoup s'impliquer. Je sais que juste à la FESFO on a une membré de 32 000 jeunes dont on consulte très régulièrement, puis on peut acquérir beaucoup d'opinions à ce sujet.

Nous croyons aussi que la création de conseils scolaires de langue française et les mécanismes de transition doivent se faire par les francophones. Les francophones ont une réalité différente en matière d'éducation que les anglophones. Je pense que c'est clair est évident. Donc, nous croyons que la création et les mécanismes de transition doivent se faire par les francophones. Il devrait aussi y avoir à la commission même un personnel francophone qui devrait être embauché pour assurer que la commission pourrait fonctionner en français, et aussi tout simplement pour connaître la réalité de l'Ontario français.

Nous aimerions aussi avoir une représentation adéquate de francophones qui pourrait possiblement inclure un jeune. Je sais que, en tant que présidente cette année, j'ai beaucoup siégé à des comités des conseils au gouvernement pour le ministère de l'Éducation, puis je pense qu'on a beaucoup pu apporter à la table avec des sujets comme ça.

Un sujet qui nous préoccupe beaucoup avec la gestion scolaire, c'est le financement. Nous aimerions avoir un financement adéquat et équitable pour les francophones. C'est évident que la gestion scolaire doit mener à une meilleure qualité d'éducation dans les écoles de langue française.

Le fonctionnement, la structure, l'organisation des conseils scolaires de langue française ne doivent pas être des reflets des anglophones. Ça ne doit pas être des miroirs des anglophones. Souvent c'est ça qu'on essaie de faire : Si c'est comme ça pour les anglophones, ça doit être comme ça pour les francophones. Ce n'est pas ça à l'école ; ce sont des réalités différentes. Puis, je pense qu'on est tous prêts à accepter ça. Alors on doit réaliser ça. On ne doit pas chercher à s'assurer que ce soit le reflet même, l'un de l'autre, puis qu'il va y avoir des différences, et accepter cela.

Aussi, lorsqu'on parle du financement, il est important de prendre en considération les besoins particuliers des francophones, tels que les petites écoles. Il y en a beaucoup. Juste en cette région ici, surtout avec les écoles secondaires de Windsor et de Toronto même, ce sont des écoles très souvent de 400 jeunes et moins. L'école à laquelle je vais à Windsor, on est la plus grande de la région, et c'est 700. On doit aussi prendre ça en considération quand vient le temps de discuter du financement.

Aussi les coûts additionnels de l'enseignement en langue française, et le rattrapage pour la transition : On ne doit pas oublier que nous sommes en train de créer des conseils scolaires de langue française, comparative aux anglophones, où on est en train d'amalgamer. Alors, c'est vraiment différent, la situation qu'on est en train de produire.

À part ça, toujours dans les financements, on doit aussi prendre en considération le rattrapage pédagogique. Je sais que cela a été mentionné dans les discours avant moi, mais c'est très vrai. C'est aussi vrai pour les francophones. On parle aussi des textes pour nos cours, et des

textes des 1970s. Je suis certaine que c'est la même chose dans les écoles anglophones aussi. Ce n'est vraiment pas moderne. Aussi pour nous, quand on parle des textes en français, souvent ça vient du Québec, et ce sont deux langues différentes : le français de l'Ontario et le français du Québec sont souvent différents. Surtout venant de Windsor, le vocabulaire qui est employé est souvent difficile pour les jeunes. C'est quelque chose à prendre en considération.

Aussi avec les bibliothèques, c'est vraiment impossible de faire un projet de recherche en se servant exclusivement des ressources dans la bibliothèque de l'école, parce qu'elles ne sont pas à date, il n'y a pas assez de variété de ressources. Vraiment, il y a un rattrapage qui doit se faire.

Le service d'orientation : Quand je suis rentrée en neuvième année cinq ans passé, c'était vraiment un service complet, où c'était des orienteurs à temps plein. Dans les quelques dernières années, il semble que c'est un service qu'on n'a pas jugé aussi important et ce sont des professeurs qui enseignent comme à demi-temps qui sont orienteurs l'autre demi-temps. Ils ne sont pas là souvent, et pour nous qui allons à l'université l'année prochaine, ou ceux qui vont au collège et ceux qui font les choix de cours pour l'année prochaine, et les huitième année qui rentrent en neuvième, il y a beaucoup de choses qui doivent se faire avec les services de l'orientation, et c'est vraiment un service qu'on a coupé dernièrement. C'est un service primordial dans les écoles secondaires, surtout.

Toujours avec les financements, le gouvernement doit tenir compte des besoins particuliers des petites écoles, surtout en ressources matérielles et humaines. Le transfert des biens des avoirs des conseils scolaires anglophones aux conseils scolaires francophones, nous pensons, devrait se faire par rapport aux besoins des francophones vivant sur les territoires et non basé sur la population étudiante de l'école. Là, ce qui pourrait se produire, c'est évident : les écoles qui n'ont pas une population étudiante si haute vont perdre dans ce cas-là, et c'est souvent le cas. Alors c'est un point qu'on aimerait que vous preniez en note.

La commission — on aimerait, ou nous trouvons — devrait inclure une représentation de jeunesse, évidemment francophone dans mon cas, surtout pour ses sous-comités et surtout pour les opinions, les suggestions et les idées que pourraient apporter ces jeunes, et non par le biais d'audiences publiques ou de mémoires. Souvent c'est ça, on pense à ça, ce serait de l'air beau d'avoir un jeune, mais je pense que souvent ce qu'apporte le jeune, c'est la réalité ; c'est vraiment le jeune qui vit les réalités mêmes.

Je pense que c'est important de se souvenir de cela. Si la commission n'a pas un jeune assis au sous-comité, je pense qu'elle va manquer une belle opportunité vraiment de voir, de témoigner des opinions des jeunes qui sont vraiment la clientèle principale des écoles, qui est la raison d'être des écoles.

Comme j'ai aussi mentionné avec la commission, nous aimerions qu'il y ait du personnel francophone pour pouvoir fonctionner en français, aussi comprendre la réalité de l'Ontario français.

Les conseils d'école : Je pense que nous sommes très d'accord que le projet de loi 104 impose vraiment les conseils d'école. Je pense que c'est déjà une loi, mais on devrait commencer à prendre des mesures pour obliger leur création. C'est très important, parce que là ça fait plus qu'un an que c'est sensé être mis sur pied dans les écoles, puis il y a beaucoup d'écoles qui n'en ont pas. Je sais qu'à mon école secondaire, c'est, «On en a un petit peu, mais pas trop,» et puis souvent quand on fait des réunions avec la FESFO, on demande aux jeunes, puis il y en a beaucoup qui n'en ont pas ou ça ne fonctionne pas, ou il y en a un mais ils ne savent pas trop comment les conseils d'école sont sensés fonctionner ou c'est quoi le rôle vraiment.

Le gouvernement doit vraiment donner des mécanismes aux conseils d'école, vraiment clarifier leur rôle, surtout si on a amalgamé des conseils scolaires de langue anglaise, et la création des conseils scolaires de langue française — si le gouvernement fait ça, il veut attribuer un plus grand rôle aux conseils d'écoles. Je pense qu'il doit mieux définir leur rôle et leur place dans l'école et leur donner des mécanismes afin de réussir ou d'atteindre cela.

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Je profiterai de l'occasion aussi — souvent on essaie de forcer le point qu'il y ait un jeune qui siège au conseil d'école. Je sais qu'il est obligatoire qu'il y en ait un au conseil d'école au niveau secondaire, mais on pousse pour qu'il y en ait plus parce que souvent un jeune, ce n'est pas assez.

On aimerait profiter de cette occasion pour pousser aussi le point d'avoir des jeunes au sein des conseils scolaires : quand vous déterminerez le nombre de postes pour les conseils scolaires, que vous réserviez un poste pour un jeune par conseil scolaire pour, évidemment, avoir des opinions des jeunes qui sont la clientèle principale. C'est ça. Je vous remercie.

Mr Wildman: My question relates to your statements around financing, if I could ask the question in English.

Mlle Larocque: Okay.

The Chair: Just a minute, Mr Wildman. Vous pouvez répondre en français.

Mlle Larocque: Je comprends l'anglais. Ce n'est pas un problème.

Mr Wildman: I note that you are saying, to use a colloquialism, that we shouldn't have a cookie-cutter approach where everybody is the same, that as a minority that is establishing new boards, very large boards, the francophone community should perhaps have additional funding to recognize the special circumstances of the francophone community. Have there been any consultations that you are aware of between ACFO or other representatives of the francophone community with the provincial government that have given an indication of what the level of funding may be, and whether or not you will get the additional funding you need?

Mlle Larocque: On a très souvent rencontré des agents au ministère, et je pense que c'est un point qu'on a poussé depuis très longtemps, l'ACFO, l'AEFO, FESFO, tous les organismes dans la communauté franc-ontarienne. C'est un point qu'on passe très souvent.

En tant que chiffres, je ne saurais pas, mais il y a des études qui ont déjà été faites pour vraiment voir la différence. C'est surtout avec les financements qui manquent dans la pédagogie, l'enseignement, les ressources matérielles et humaines : c'est vraiment ce que ça prend qui est nécessaire.

C'est quelque chose qu'on pousse ça fait longtemps mais qu'on n'a jamais eu. Quand on nous a présenté la gestion scolaire, on n'a jamais dit «avec un financement équitable ou adéquat», alors on a toujours cette préoccupation-là.

Mr Skarica: Thank you very much for your presentation. I enjoyed it very much. We've heard from a number of boards that they are going to have problems with geography, the larger boards, and obviously that's going to apply to the francophone boards as well. Do you have any ideas as to how you are going to cope with the large geographic distances that are covered by the 11 boards?

Mlle Larocque: Pour nous c'est vrai, comme 11 conseils scolaires, considérant le vaste territoire de l'Ontario, ce n'est pas assez, mais on a quand même très bien accueilli la gestion scolaire avec 11 conseils scolaires. Je pense que la communauté franco-ontarienne est tellement habituée à avoir à se rallier et à se rassembler ensemble qu'on se partage déjà des ressources humaines, matérielles, pédagogiques. Je pense que ça va être difficile, et c'est pour ça qu'on espère avoir un financement pour assurer cette transition-là. Ça va être quand même difficile, surtout quand on parle du nord, où le territoire peut comprendre 12 heures de différence de route.

Je pense que les francophones sont tellement heureux d'avoir la gestion scolaire et d'avoir leurs conseils scolaires de langue française qu'ils sont prêts à accueillir ça.

M. Duncan : Merci pour votre présentation. Je sais que ce projet de loi est très important pour la communauté francophone et pour l'éducation franco-ontarienne. Je veux vous poser seulement une question, et comme le troisième parti, c'est une question de financement.

Vous avez dit dans votre deuxième recommandation que le gouvernement donne un financement équitable et adéquat, mais vous avez expliqué qu'il y a plusieurs autres faits qui sont uniques pour la communauté francophone. Avez-vous peur — moi, j'ai peur que le gouvernement ne pourra pas prévoir le financement adéquat pour les écoles secondaires, pour les écoles françaises ici en Ontario.

Pouvez-vous expliquer pour moi encore, avec plus de détails, les facteurs particuliers pour la communauté francophone, et pour les jeunes francophones particulièrement, et comment le gouvernement peut répondre à ces facteurs ?

Mlle Larocque : Premièrement, juste gérer une école de langue française coûte plus cher qu'une école de langue anglaise. Premièrement, juste le personnel enseignant, la formation des enseignants et des enseignantes, est un facteur qui est important. Les ressources pédagogiques ne sont pas aussi disponibles ou vastes que pour les anglophones, alors on doit aller plus loin pour chercher une ressource pédagogique.

Il y a aussi le facteur que les écoles sont souvent plus petites. Il est évident que ça coûte plus cher de gérer une plus petite école, surtout les plus petites écoles ici dans

la région ou dans le nord, très nord. C'est ça vraiment, c'est plus cher de ce côté-là.

La Présidente : Merci bien, Mademoiselle Larocque. C'est vraiment un plaisir de vous avoir avec nous. Je dois vous dire que vous avez vraiment fait honneur à la jeunesse francophone. Au revoir.

CHRIS LORETTO

The Chair: The next presenters are Steve Bauer and Chris Loretto. Welcome, gentlemen. Good evening.

Mr Steve Bauer: I was the original person, so I'd like to pass my time on to Chris.

The Chair: That's very generous of you.

Mr Chris Loretto: Thank you very much, Steve. It's a pleasure to be with you tonight, and I'll try to make this as quick as possible so we can all get home and watch the Oscars.

Never before in Ontario's history has quality education been so important. A well-educated, highly skilled workforce is key to Ontario's future success. In order to provide the students of Ontario with the education they need and deserve to compete in the new global economy, we must have a system that uses its resources to the benefit of the students and not to the benefit of its bureaucracy.

Currently, thousands of jobs go unfilled in this country because we are not graduating students with the skills to fill those jobs. Our education system must be student-centred. Ontario students must have access to an education system that will provide them with the skills they need to gain meaningful and well-paying employment.

I do not believe that our current education system is doing enough to prepare students for the 21st century. This belief is not rooted in the view that our education system is short of money. It is rooted in the view that the money that is being spent is not being spent wisely and effectively.

I believe Bill 104 will go a long way in restoring sanity to education spending and will help to provide each and every student with the education they deserve. They deserve nothing short of the best.

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I support the government's decision to take education funding off the residential property tax bill. The new funding model proposed by the Minister of Education will go a long way to ensure that money is spent wisely and that every student in Ontario has access to the best quality education. The new funding model is necessary because school boards have proven themselves to be incapable of keeping costs in line. Between 1985 and 1995, total school enrolment only increased by 16%, while school board spending increased by 82% and property taxes went up by 120%. If current spending was to continue, residential taxpayers would be paying \$6.2 billion for education by the year 2000. Some have tried to justify this increased taxing and spending by pointing out that our education system faces many new demands, whether it's English as a second language or meal programs etc. But the numbers just do not add up.

The new funding model that will replace the current system will ensure that costs are kept reasonable while

ensuring that students' needs are being met. The funding model will be a grant system based on student needs. This is why it will work.

Another benefit of taking education off the property tax is that it corrects the inequities inherent in the current system. The current system has created two different tiers of students in this province, the haves and the have-nots. Today, the wealthier the student's community, the better his or her education will be. Why should a student's educational opportunities be dependent on the wealth of his or her community? Students in northern Ontario have just as much right to quality programming, new books and modern technological equipment as a student in Toronto or Windsor. If Ontario is to succeed in the 21st century, we cannot afford to have two classes of students.

Bill 104 promises to give all students the opportunities they deserve. If a quality education is to be available to all, we must streamline the bureaucracy. I applaud this government's decision to cut the number of school boards from 129 to 66. It still boggles the mind how anyone could defend having four school boards in Essex county alone. Essex county never needed four sets of trustees, never needed four directors of education, never needed all the problems that came along with four bureaucracies. Students, teachers and parents will be much better served by two boards in this community as opposed to four.

The public and students will also be better served with fewer politicians. The school councils the government has committed to raise very exciting possibilities. We need more parental and community involvement in our school. I hope our current and future trustees work to make these parent councils a success. They will be key to a successful education system in the future.

Bill 104 is a step in the right direction. The status quo is no longer serving the needs of students. Our education system must be changed to maintain Ontario's standing in the global economy.

Mr Smith: Thank you for your presentation this evening. Certainly the proponents of the bill have described Bill 104, as you have, as a step in the right direction. Interestingly, when we were in Ottawa, I believe it was the chamber that indicated there was demand for some 2,000 high-tech positions which aren't currently being met. What would you suggest to the government of Ontario in terms of providing some positive steps to address the various concerns we've heard in Ottawa and other areas with respect to job demand and our ability to fill them with qualified students?

Mr Loretto: There has to be an emphasis on technological studies. I believe in the government's background paper on high school reform that it released late last year, it was starting to go in the right direction. What we need in Ontario is a computer in every classroom. Right now we don't have a computer in every classroom. I think the new funding model the government is proposing will go a long way in assuring that one day we have a computer in every classroom, whether it be in northern Ontario, Toronto or here in Windsor. I think there needs to be an emphasis on that.

The education system has to be very flexible and has to be able to change as the dynamics of the global economy change, so our students are always right on step

with the changes that are going on in the global economy. We can't be two steps behind, like we are now. We have to be right in step. If not in step, we have to be ahead of step so we can predict the future trends. We have to prepare our students better. That's what we have to do.

Mrs McLeod: As a northerner, I appreciate your sympathetic concern for the needs of northern Ontario students and the fact that they should be met. I should tell you, though, that the concern our committee heard right across northern Ontario was that northerners are not terribly confident that Queen's Park is going to understand the needs of northern students or northern school boards.

That leads me to a question about the funding model, because you've put a lot of emphasis on the importance of the funding model in ensuring that the dollars go into the classroom where those dollars are needed. The funding model is being developed. None of us has seen it. Clearly, as you've stated, it has a very important bearing on whether this legislation does what the government says it will do. Would you not agree that we should see the funding model before this legislation is put in place?

Mr Loretto: I think the Minister of Education has been clear on which direction he's going to take the funding model in. It's going to be a per pupil grant. I don't know how much more clear you can be than that. If we have a guarantee from the government that it's going to be a per pupil grant, that at least assures me that a student in Toronto will be getting the same funding as a student in northern Ontario and vice versa.

Mrs McLeod: It's quite confusing, though, because he says he's going to meet every student need but he's also said he's going to take \$1.2 billion out of education. We haven't found anybody who believes you can do both.

Mr Loretto: I don't think the minister has said anything about taking a billion or two out of education.

Mrs McLeod: Yes, he has.

Mr Loretto: I do think the minister has said that the last round of the cuts — he's freezing education levels at what they are right now. To go along with your question, Mrs McLeod, shouldn't we wait till we see if there actually are any spending cuts? I don't think there will be.

Mr Wildman: Thanks very much for your presentation. I found it interesting and stimulating. I would just like to point out, though, that the minister has said that in 1997 the grants will be frozen but there will be further cuts in 1998. He has said that. He has also on occasion said he would like to take \$1 billion out of the system. That's not something we've made up.

My question is — to be fair, maybe I should preface it by asking you if you've read the bill.

Mr Loretto: Yes, I have read the bill.

Mr Wildman: Where in the bill does it talk about the funding model? Where does it tell us what the funding model is going to be, that the grant system will be based on student needs and that it will give students in Ontario equal opportunity? I can't find that in Bill 104.

Mr Loretto: I think the minister has been remarkably clear in saying that this is the first step and that the funding model will be introduced this spring. As for your

question about taking \$1 billion out of education, when looking at the Royal Commission on Learning report saying that 47% is spent outside of the classroom —

Mr Wildman: The royal commission didn't say that; Mr Sweeney said that.

Mr Loretto: Mr Sweeney said that, who was a former Liberal cabinet minister, I might mention. But if you take that 47% and get it down to the 40% that was recommended, that is about \$1 billion. But there has been no commitment on the part of the Minister of Education saying he is definitely going to go through with that. If he does, there's a lot of room outside the classroom to make those spending cuts.

Mr Wildman: Just to be fair, Mr Snobelen has been clear, and I appreciate the fact that he's been clear, that there will be further cuts in 1998 and that he hopes to get \$1 billion out of the system. I think he's been very straight with the people of the province and I don't think we should pretend he hasn't been.

The Chair: Thank you very much, gentlemen, for being here and for your presentation. We appreciate it. 1950

Mr Duncan: I have a question for the parliamentary assistant. We've heard it asserted by two delegations now about the percentage of costs that are administrative in nature. One delegation earlier today said 80%, I think. This gentleman indicated 47%. The government passed out a book not too long ago breaking out those costs, and I wonder if they could make that available to us tomorrow at the hearings.

Mr Skarica: The 47% is from the Sweeney report.

Mr Duncan: I recognize that, but we need to define what we're talking about. As I recollect, the numbers in Mr Snobelen's report were significantly different. I know the numbers from the Windsor boards were both in the vicinity of about 18%, according to the document that was distributed by the government. I'd just like to get an accurate handle on these things and how we define them.

Mr Skarica: I think we're talking about the Sweeney report and the Ernst and Young report. It's not 80%; it's for every dollar that's spent in the classroom, 80 cents is spent outside. But I'll get those reports.

The Chair: Mr Duncan, you're requiring some response in writing, is that it?

Mr Duncan: Please.

Mrs McLeod: Did I understand the parliamentary assistant to say that for every dollar spent, 80 cents is spent outside the classroom, or were you reiterating a former percentage statement?

Mr Skarica: No, and I don't recall the exact name of the report, but for every dollar spent inside the classroom, there's 80 cents spent outside the classroom, so that's around 45%.

JIM COOKE

The Chair: I ask Adam Cave to come forward. Welcome. Perhaps you'll identify your co-presenter.

Mr Adam Cave: Good evening. My name is Adam Cave, and at this point in time, I would like to pass my seat to Jim Cooke.

Mr Jim Cooke: Good evening. My name is Jim Cooke. I am a trustee for the Windsor Board of Educa-

tion in ward 5. I have a very brief presentation to make. I've also been fooling around with my computer and printed it up for you. I'll pass it to Bud and maybe he can pass it around to everybody.

The Chair: We'll pass it to the clerk.

Mr Cooke: I want to first of all thank all the committee members for sitting so long in Windsor to hear the concerns of this community about the future of education. I also want to thank Dwight Duncan for his open house last night about the education reforms. Any consultation is appreciated by this community, and we appreciate the committee coming down here and we certainly appreciate Mr Duncan and his colleagues for holding their forum last night.

The recent announcements, it should be made clear, concern three separate and distinct issues. The first issue, which this committee is dealing with, is education governance, particularly the Fewer School Boards Act. Second, in a separate and distinct issue, which is not before us today, is the education funding model that we should be seeing shortly. Last is the level of funding for public education in Ontario.

I support the Fewer School Boards Act. Bill 104 will enable our school system to operate more efficiently and will eliminate the hundreds of mini-ministries of education which have unnecessarily existed throughout Ontario. By amalgamating school boards and redefining the role of trustees, I am confident that millions of dollars will be saved. Those dollars can be redirected back into the classroom and help meet the fiscal goals of our government.

The new funding model will end the reliance of school boards on the residential property tax base, and that is a welcome and important reform. By funding education out of the provincial government's general revenue fund, more equity will be achieved throughout Ontario.

No child should receive an inferior education because they live in an so-called assessment-poor region of Ontario. Although I represent an assessment-rich board, I cannot ignore the needs of thousands of children across Ontario which have not been met by reason of the inequitable funding of education through the residential property tax base.

The new model of school governance will save millions of dollars. The new model of school funding will provide equity across the province. Both of these reforms will assist our government in achieving its fiscal goals. The hysteria with which these reforms have been greeted by some education bureaucrats and trustees — and I must stress the word "some" — is not surprising. My provincial organization, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, is in my opinion less concerned with the quality of education than in preserving the position of hundreds of unnecessary trustees. The Ontario Public School Boards' Association does not speak for trustees like myself who are concerned with the quality of education across Ontario. They wish only to preserve the status quo and the outdated role of trustees as managers of the education system.

Too often trustees have been involved in the day-to-day affairs of school boards. The absolutely absurd situation in Toronto with full-time trustees earning almost

\$50,000 a year is simply a glaring example of how the role of the trustee has become muddled and ineffective in the last 20 to 25 years.

The fact is that these reforms for school governance are good for our schools and good for our children. Particularly, they will allow trustees to focus on what is important, ensuring quality education for all our children.

Some trustees today and elsewhere at your hearings have used the so-called accountability argument. Some trustees argue that they are locally accountable for what they do and therefore provide better school governance. This argument is frankly a joke. School boards across Ontario, including my own, choose to be accountable when they want to be.

In Essex county, the separate school board has refused to release the details of a retirement package for its director of education. On my own school board, behind closed doors, our board decided to support a legal challenge to Bill 104 and the new funding model. In doing so, they decided to spend almost \$12,000 of taxpayers' money, and did so behind closed doors, behind the backs of taxpayers. These are but two examples of the lack of accountability of trustees across Ontario.

The fact is that the current school governance model is almost 200 years old and is outdated and ill equipped to deal with the challenges of the 21st century. The new district school boards will be efficient and focused. While I agree that there are elements of the Fewer School Boards Act that could be interpreted as being undemocratic, I believe these measures are required to ensure a smooth transition to a more efficient model of school governance. My board, the Windsor Board of Education, has, I believe, acted very responsibly in moving towards an amalgamated school board. However, the actions of our colleagues in Toronto, for instance, by paying themselves a ridiculous severance package, illustrate why tight control during the transition period is required.

Many trustees and school board officials are resisting amalgamation. Their efforts cannot be permitted to delay the transition to a new governing system. I urge the members of this committee and the members of their respective caucuses to move ahead with Bill 104 and get it passed as soon as possible. It is time to move on to the 21st century and move away from the inefficient, antiquated system of the past.

It is time to reduce the number of school boards, reduce the number of trustees, introduce fair funding and focus our resources where they belong, in the classroom and on delivering accountable, quality education. Thank you.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much. I find the numbers behind your argument somewhat vague, to say the least. When you use a term like "hundreds of mini-ministries," I assume you are referring to the reduction in the numbers of school boards. But with only 129 to begin with, it's hard to see how hundreds of mini-ministries are about to be reduced.

The issue of millions of dollars is the one I'd like to ask you about. The minister's own calculations, and he used a consultant to verify them, suggest that the most he's looking to save from the amalgamation is \$150 million. In fact, to do that he has to go into school

supplies and equipment to get \$9.9 million; he has to take \$1.3 million directly out of educational assistance to support special needs students; he has to take some \$13 million out of school busing — and I stress that's not out of the administration of school busing but out of direct bus routes for kids.

That same consultant report that said if you want to make those assumptions, you could probably save that \$150 million on the \$14-billion budget, also said, "But we should draw to your attention the concern that under amalgamation, costs could go up, not down, as a result of the harmonization of salaries and services." The ministry's answer, in writing, essentially was, "We will take control of educational finance and we will control those costs."

Clearly, if costs are not to go up — and whether or not you believe the ministry plans to cut, you've got to believe they don't intend to let the costs go up — they are going to have to cut services or salaries or both. I assume, then, you agree with that.

Mr Cooke: What we'd have to look at — and I don't necessarily agree with the leaked consultants' report. I think there is money to be saved. In Windsor alone, between the two out of the four boards, I think we're going to save between \$10 million and \$20 million. We're going to do that by first of all taking a very hard look at what we do in administration. We're going to have to, and it's a hard fact of life. I've faced unemployment myself and there are going to be other people who will in the school board. That's simply a fact of life. We can't afford to continue to employ the bloated bureaucracies that we have right now.

But as we eliminate senior administration and as we move through the transition of harmonizing our collective agreements, and looking to adopt the efficiencies that exist in a more efficient school board, I think we can save the money. It's going to be a lot of work, but I think we can do better than that consultant's report predicted and better than the minister expects us to do, and we will in Windsor.

Mr Wildman: Thank you, Jim. It's nice to see you again.

Mr Cooke: Nice seeing you, Bud.

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Mr Wildman: I would just point out on page 4, while not defending the Toronto board in any way, that the reference to the severance package gives the impression that it was done after Bill 104 was introduced. In fact it was in 1994, before the provincial election.

I'd like to deal with the suggestion that you can save \$10 million to \$20 million. How do you square that with Mr Tom Wells's findings in 1993, when he looked at Windsor-Essex and he said that significant savings from amalgamation would be doubtful? As a matter of fact, he felt that amalgamation was likely to increase costs rather than reduce them and that the costs in restructuring the boards in Windsor-Essex would outweigh the savings and benefits.

Mr Cooke: I think Tom's report has a couple of flaws in it; one I think understandably. He became a bit frustrated with the process as he experienced the tremendous resistance to amalgamation that was coming from

our counterpart in the county. I'm not being critical of him for opposing amalgamation, but I think it was part of the dynamic that was going on. Part of his assumption was that collective agreements would be bumped up; that is, if one counterpart was making less than another, everybody would be bumped up to the higher level. That's an error to make, and I think he was wrong in doing so.

Second, I think it was a post-haste sort of investigation and it failed to look at other areas where we can eliminate entire departments. For instance, we don't need two program departments now in Essex and Windsor; we can have one. We don't need two directors; we can have one. We can reduce superintendents, I'm convinced, by at least five or six. We also have a tremendous excess capacity in our secondary schools across the county. We don't need to keep every school open now. We can reduce the number of schools we have because we have this excess capacity. I say that not to be hardhearted, but this is where we can save real dollars. I don't think (a) Tom looked at that or had the time to look at it, and (b) I think he realized how difficult, politically, it was going to be to create some sort of voluntary amalgamation. The numbers have changed, and I look more to the Sweeney report as our guide to how we can save money.

Mr Skarica: Sir, on page 4: I want to touch on an area that neither of the other parties has decided to touch on, and that's the \$12,000 of taxpayers' money being spent to sue the government. I have two questions regarding it. One is, what consultation took place between the board and the parents, children and taxpayers, and second, where would that money otherwise have been spent?

Mr Cooke: It's been an issue of mine. It's not a lot of money, but the fact is that there was no consultation. We did it behind closed doors in our committee of the whole meeting, and in my view it was an illegal action of the board. I have to say I brought a motion to rescind that action of the board at the very next meeting. The trustees voted not to hear that motion rather than debate the merits of spending a lot of money — and I'm a lawyer; I'm also here, ironically, to ask you to cut my salary as a trustee in half and I'm also here to say we shouldn't be wasting money on lawyers. That \$12,000 may not seem like a lot of money, but to a child in a classroom, and in four separate classrooms, who could have got a top-of-the-line PC or Macintosh computer to learn on, it is a lot of money. Frankly, for most of my constituents in ward 5, \$12,000 is a lot of money, and there are a lot of things we could have done for kids with that money.

In principle, the problem with it is that (1) I don't think one level of government should be suing another level of government; and (2) if this is found to be unconstitutional, then we're going to have to face the fact, as people of Ontario, that we're in an absolute straitjacket and there is absolutely nothing we can do to reform our local governance system. To me that would be an absolute disaster.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Cooke, Mr Cave, for being here tonight and presenting to us.

Mr Cooke: I want to thank you all for listening to me and I hope you get Bill 104 passed very quickly.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, I'd just like to suggest that if Mr Skarica is concerned about the cost of constitutional challenges, he bring forward the motion suggesting that the government refer the bill to the Court of Appeal for reconsideration by the committee.

The Chair: Thank you for your suggestion.

BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S CLUB OF ONTARIO PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF ONTARIO

The Chair: Ms Susan Lescinsky. Welcome, Ms Lescinsky. Thank you for being here this evening.

Mrs Susan Lescinsky: Thank you very much for inviting me to make a presentation to you. I'm here on three fronts: I'm here for the business and professional women's club — I am the vice-president of the provincial board — I am here on behalf of the provincial council of women — I am also a vice-president on that board — and I am here as a parent of two students. I sit on the parent councils both at a high school level and at an elementary school.

I'd just like to explain a little bit about the two organizations that I belong to. Our mandate on both organizations is to seek equality towards the improvement of political, economic and social conditions for women as well as families and communities. Both of these organizations are non-profit, non-partisan organizations which promote the interests of working women in the professions, industry and also in the public sector.

There are a few things, in looking over Bill 104, that we have some concerns about. One of them has to do with the downsizing of the school boards. When the Wells commission was going around in 1993, the business and professional women's club had presented a paper to him and we had agreed with the amalgamation of the school boards here in this area. We had suggested that there be two boards instead of the four that were here. It would also save money. We were concerned with the administration, supplies and the school boards also.

The provincial council of women has a similar state of resolutions that we pass at our provincial council meetings every year. One of those resolutions also urges the government to adopt a policy that will reduce the numbers of school boards in Ontario. It goes on to further urge the ministry to put in place boards that will represent separate geographic regions. By setting up boards in this manner, the responsibility of the members would be for the regional area.

Even though education has to be universal, with standards put in place to ensure that students have basic, rudimentary knowledge, the understanding of different needs in each of the locales can only be met by the individuals who serve that area.

Having to do with the election and appointment of board members, we are very concerned with some of the things that are appointments rather than elections. Appointments mean that nobody has some sort of input into who is going to be in those chairs.

We are very concerned that there be gender equity across the board, that groups in the Abella report are also

going to be represented there: people who are disabled, aboriginal peoples and visible minority groups. Those people too are part of our system, they're part of the people they represent in the community, and we want to make sure they are represented on those boards. So both on the local board and the district boards that you are speaking about in Bill 104, it's very important that those people be elected to those positions and that there also be gender equality and that everybody gets representation.

The Education Improvement Commission will oversee the governance of a new system that will make recommendations to parental involvement in the education system. Parents have a very large stake in the way their students are being educated. They pay taxes to the system and they are there to provide children with an education for the future.

But concerns, more or less, of parents also have to do with violence, discrimination, special education programs, apprenticeship and non-core programs that should be viewed from a parent's perspective. Some of these things have been lost as cuts have been taking place in the education system and they are very important.

As a parent with a student or as a mother who has a child with a very minimal learning disability, it's very important to me to make sure that the special education programs that have been in place are kept there. The cuts that have been proposed at times make a very big dent in the type of education that my son gets — without making sure that the cuts are not going to take place at the special education level. That is very important for very many of us. That also has to do with disablement: making sure that people are on the boards to look after the disabled issues.

Restrictions on the composition of local boards and district councils: So that the councils do not become overwhelmed with one constituency of people and move, possibly, into a charter system, representatives from across the district should be maintained on the board. By allowing local districts the ability to decide distinct curriculum and policy for the schools, a breakdown of the system, and territorial turfs could evolve.

Education is a system of equality for everyone, and standard methods of teaching and curriculum should be the same across the province. With many families moving, job opportunities changing all the time, displacement of children could happen very easily.

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The concern with contracting out that is also in Bill 104: Women are the majority of workers in clerical, janitorial and the service industries and they make the lowest pay. We have to make sure that the things that have been fought for for a long time with the unions — that women get proper pay, proper vacation, proper benefits — stay in place. These women are from single-parent families. They are also people who have to make a living for themselves so they can keep their children out of poverty and make sure they can provide a good income for their families as it is. You know very well that they are good consumers in the economy, and unless they have money to spend, the economy is not going to go anywhere. You have to make sure, when thinking

about it, that it isn't privatized and the wages are going to drop.

In conclusion, the cost-cutting measures through the education system are supported by the Business and Professional Women's Club of Ontario as well as the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario as long as they ensure that the savings are being transferred to the students. Proper technology, books, education curriculum should reflect any cost savings in the reduction of the school boards or in the amalgamation. However, inside workers should be maintained through a system that is currently in place.

Members of district and local boards should reflect the constituency they serve. Elections for these members should take place in a fair and equitable manner. Gender balance and inclusion of equity groups as well as members from the community should be realized. Unless all the stakeholders at the table speak to the issues, the education and training that are presented to students will be not focused on the realities of their lives.

Education is very important and key to the students' future. Unless the sole purpose of this exercise is to make sure that money is put back into the education system for the benefit of all the students, this will all be lost.

At the back, on the very last two pages there are resolutions from the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario and the Business and Professional Women's Club of Ontario that have been passed at conferences. The whole province of Ontario, all the women, stand behind these.

Mrs Boyd: Thank you very much for your presentation. I think your premise and that of the two groups you represent, that this might not be so bad if we could be sure all the money was going to go back to students, is a good one. But as you probably heard if you were here when some of the other presenters were there, it's quite clear that the government intends to take more money out of the education system and not put it in. What do you say to that?

Mrs Lescinsky: It's still important. That's why I think the hearings are very important: to make sure the party in government knows it is important that the money be put back into the system to help students.

Students are the key to the future of this country. They are also the ones who are going to make the jobs go. They are the ones who are either going to be on social assistance or making jobs for themselves and working and providing for the economy in this province.

It's very important that the education they get is a good one, so it's very important, Mrs Boyd, that we make sure the money is put back into the system, so that they get a good education, so that they can go out and be members of society and pay taxes and do what the rest of us do.

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I'd like to thank you for your presentation today. There are many things in this presentation that I agree with. I have kids in the elementary school system. I'm very concerned about their education, so I appreciate your comments.

In your conclusions you say there should be elections for the members of the Education Improvement Commission, especially at the local level I think you're saying, and that those elections should happen because it would

make the system fair and equitable. But at the same time you say there has to be gender balance and a number of issues.

If you were going to have an election, I don't understand how you would get the gender balance. I can understand how you may get geographic balance, because you may say that two have to come from a specific area, but I don't think you could ever say, "One woman has to be elected out of this." How would you propose that would happen?

Mrs Lescinsky: When putting out the election call, you have to make sure they realize that it has to be equitable. If the government will stand behind the equity process, then we'll make sure the equity process is going to be fair.

I understand that with elections you cannot just say, "Okay, one for this and one for that." But if you're going to make sure there is some sort of equity balance, then make sure that when the election is called there is a cap on spending so that one person does not spend \$5,000 to get into a position and the other one doesn't spend \$10,000 to get into a position, because obviously the person who's got the most money is going to be able to spend the most on the election to get that position. Make sure you're going out to a broad constituency to look for people to fill those roles. School boards and parents' committees can go out and solicit to find people for those positions.

Mrs McLeod: I'm also extremely concerned about how representative these new amalgamated boards will be, and there are a couple of reasons for my concern. With a smaller number of trustees in a larger geographic area, one of the things we've been told is that it won't be possible for many communities to have even a single trustee under this model. In some areas, particularly in northern Ontario, trustees will have to travel as much as 200 miles to attend a meeting, and clearly that would be particularly difficult for someone who's disabled and for a single parent. I'm wondering whether you think there's any possibility of ensuring a representative-type board under this new model.

Mrs Lescinsky: Many organizations have made provisions for the disabled. You have extra money allotted for them so that they can travel. There's a multitude of ways to work around it. Yes, it's putting more money in the system to make sure that the expenditures are there for people who are disabled, but it's not to say it can't be done.

Just by saying that, you're putting them in a corner and saying they can't go out of their homes because they've got long distances to travel, so you're saying they can't be represented on the board. That's not something that's acceptable to women who in many instances are disabled. They have children and they should be able to serve just as well as anybody else. They have a voice and they should be able to talk for their children too. Have expenditures allotted in the system that are able to pay to get them to these board meetings.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Lescinsky, for coming here tonight and sharing with us your views and those of your organizations.

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DENNIS BAILLARGEON

The Chair: Our next presenter was Brendan O'Connor, but he's been substituted by Dennis Baillargeon. Is Mr Baillargeon here today? Yes. Good evening and welcome.

Mr Dennis Baillargeon: My name is Dennis Baillargeon. I do not represent a union or a political party.

My son, Kirk, is fully integrated and has a pupil assistant who's considered to be a non-teaching part of the staff in the county separate school system. Her name is Roberta. Bill 104 clearly states that this position should be outsourced, but to whom? He needs this assistant in class because he is challenged in life, both mentally and physically. He cannot speak and has been learning to use a talk board attached to his wheelchair to communicate his needs and thoughts. Roberta also wipes the drool that is constantly flowing from his mouth and changes his soiled diaper when needed. Kirk has excelled in school beyond my expectation.

The teachers tell me that Kirk also teaches the children a very important lesson that cannot be found in books: the human art of compassion and acceptance. You see, despite Kirk's disabilities, he is by far the happiest member of my family. This, I feel, is a direct result of his acceptance at school among his classmates. When Kirk is leaving for school in the morning, it's sometimes difficult to contain him in his wheelchair because he's so excited. What system of integration will we have with the passing of Bill 104?

In years to come, will people like my son become a larger burden on their communities and society as a whole because they were not able to integrate themselves at their formative and early years? Presently many physically and mentally challenged people work at subsidized jobs throughout our communities. Yes, the taxpayers fund a part of these industries that are growing, but what is the alternative?

Should we segregate these individuals and warehouse them all together? Certainly it would be immediately cost-effective to separate all these people into separate classrooms because they would need fewer assistants, but I appeal to you: What do you with these less fortunate members of society when they grow up with the understanding that they don't belong with the rest of us? I'll answer that question. Many of these people who feel they don't belong end up in our prisons and institutions, sometimes for the rest of their lives. What is the real cost to our communities? I know this for a fact because I've been sponsoring people who come out of the prisons. Although I've never been in one, I've been helping with them since 1982. One thing they have in common is a feeling of not being loved and not belonging to the rest of us.

Another point: Grade 3 testing is going on in our school right now, and I'd like to know how these results are going to be interpreted. Yesterday, on Sunday, March 23, at a forum meeting at Kennedy collegiate for Bill 104, Gerard Charette was speaking on behalf of the Progressive Conservatives in favour of the bill and was using the results of tests to create the perception of a

crisis in Ontario schools. Presently these tests are for a completed grade 3 level, yet there is still another term left in the school year. What a shameful practice, using our children to gain a political objective. Thank you.

Mr Skarica: Regarding those tests, sir, they are being administered by the EQAO, which is an arm's-length agency. Ms Green is probably the person you should address for those questions, but she's an arm's-length individual and she's not associated with the government. I just thought you should know that.

Mr Baillargeon: I'd like to answer that. The reason I'm concerned is because the teachers have raised my concern, because I also have a son in grade 3. They're the ones who told me that they haven't even dealt with some of the questions on there in school yet. It's coming up in the future months. How could they possibly know the answers to the questions when they haven't learned that yet?

Mr Skarica: I just wanted to indicate to you that it is an arm's-length agency, and Ms Green is the individual you should contact if you have concerns.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate the concerns you're raising as a parent of a special-needs child. I have already mentioned a couple of times today my concern that one of the areas in which the government sees itself saving money with this amalgamation is in taking money away from educational assistants who provide the kind of support you've just described.

I've also seen what's happened with the cuts the government has already made and the numbers of boards that have had to reduce their support for special education, for assessment and integration. The minister, when you raise those concerns now, says, "That's the decision of the local school board; I had nothing to do with it," and I think he will say the same thing even when he's responsible for 100% of the funding.

I wonder whether you feel you'll have much success in advocating directly with the Minister of Education or the bureaucrats in Queen's Park for your child or that other parents of special-needs children will have much success when they control 100% of the funding.

Mr Baillargeon: The slides you were seeing with Rick Macdonald, when he was here putting slides up, many of those pictures were from my son's school. My wife is chair of the bingo committee and I work bingos constantly. We have raised in the hundreds of thousands of dollars for that school. That's why they had all those pictures. Rick does not reflect the parents in that school in any way by endorsing this bill. That's not true. I have not met any parents who support it. I don't know where he got the idea that they endorse the bill. I don't know.

Mrs Boyd: Thank you very much for coming. I know how difficult it is sometimes to talk from personal experience, and how worried you must be about the educational experience of your special child. We have heard, all of us in our offices, from parents like you who are worried about what has already happened with the cuts in education and the fact that the government supported the court action of the Brant board to not have to care for a special needs child within the public education system. So I share your concern.

What really worries me is that there is no assurance in this bill or in any of the other measures we have seen come forward, like the secondary curriculum study and that sort of thing, that this government really understands how important integration is and how in the long run, as you pointed out so eloquently, it really is going to help us all if we can integrate these children and have them become as productive as they possibly can.

Mr Baillargeon: I don't just say it. I know it; I feel it; I see it. I've been working with people since 1982 who are troubled, and some of them are alcoholics or drug addicts — generally they have come out of prison — and my wife has helped me. We do all these things and we don't get paid for them, but they make us feel good. We get rewarded, but not monetarily.

I know there are a lot of Conservative members who are very good people, and I'm not trying to pick on you by talking about Mr Charette, but you have to understand what's happening here. We're going to feel the effects down the road, and man, is it going to hit us like a tidal wave when all these kids who have problems — if we lose these assistants in schools, sometimes they are more important than the teachers, because it's one on one. They contribute to society down the road if they're working. I know some people personally who have gotten jobs because they were accepted in our community and we helped them along.

The alternative is to shun them. You know what's going to happen. Think about it. They're going to go wacko. They're going to commit crimes and they're going to end up in jails or institutions or things like that. We have to take care of them; we have to look after them. We don't need a fair funding system, because if you give them a dollar and you give me a dollar, it costs \$10 for them to get to where I am for a dollar. Does that make sense?

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Baillargeon. We appreciate your coming here and telling your story. It's very helpful.

ASSOCIATION DES ENSEIGNANTES
ET DES ENSEIGNANTS FRANCO-ONTARIENS,
UNITÉS ESSEX
ÉLÉMENTAIRE ET SECONDAIRE,
UNITÉS WINDSOR
ÉLÉMENTAIRE ET SECONDAIRE

La Présidente : L'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens : Paul Lachance, Marie-France Boulet, Marilyn Laframboise et Nicole Lalonde. Bienvenue. Merci d'être ici.

M. Paul Lachance : Merci beaucoup, Madame la Présidente. Dans un premier temps j'aimerais très rapidement présenter les membres de l'AEFO qui vous présentent leur mémoire ce soir : M^{me} Marilyn Laframboise, présidente de l'unité Essex élémentaire, M^{me} Nicole Lalonde, qui est présidente de l'unité Windsor élémentaire, et M^{me} Marie-France Boulet, présidente de l'unité Windsor secondaire.

J'aimerais remercier le comité de l'Assemblée législative de cette occasion que vous nous donnez ce soir de présenter quelques réflexions que nous avons au sujet du

projet de loi 104. Les unités de l'AEFO représentent quelque 300 enseignantes et enseignants qui oeuvrent dans les écoles élémentaires et secondaires de la région de Windsor et Essex.

J'aimerais vous rappeler que nos quatre unités appuient pleinement la position que notre association provinciale a prise le 6 mars dernier devant ce comité lors des audiences à Ottawa. J'aimerais ajouter aussi que nous appuyons pleinement le projet de loi 104 en ce qui a trait à la création des conseils scolaires de langue française, et plus précisément, la création du Conseil de district des écoles catholiques du sud-ouest.

Comme vous le savez déjà, les francophones de la région réclament depuis très longtemps la gestion de leurs écoles de langue française et nous sentons que c'est une victoire pour les Franco-Ontariennes et les Franco-Ontariens. Nous savons que l'éducation en langue française s'améliora d'autant plus de par la gestion et le contrôle de nos écoles que nous aurons maintenant par ce conseil scolaire.

Par contre, nous aimerions soulever ce soir quelques points, parce que le projet de loi est silencieux sur certains points qui sont d'une extrême importance pour nous. Ces quatre points sont la protection des enseignantes et des enseignants ; toute la question de l'impartition des services, c'est-à-dire la sous-traitance ; la question du financement de l'éducation, qui est une préoccupation majeure ; et de cette préoccupation du financement, la question des services en langue française que nous offrons à nos élèves dans nos écoles.

Pour ce premier point, celui de la protection des enseignantes et enseignants, j'inviterais M^{me} Lalonde à faire le point.

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M^{me} Nicole Lalonde : L'AEFO Windsor et Essex catholique déplore le fait que le projet de loi ne prévoit aucune garantie contractuelle pour le personnel enseignant qu'elle représente. De telles garanties faisaient pourtant partie intégrante de la Loi 30 sur le parachèvement de nos conseils scolaires catholiques.

Nous avons environ 50 % de nos enseignantes et enseignants qui ont moins de 10 ans d'ancienneté et qui, après les mesures injustes du contrat social, craignent d'autres désengagements de la part du présent gouvernement.

L'AEFO Windsor et Essex catholique demande que le projet de loi soit modifié comme recommandé dans le mémoire provincial présenté à Ottawa le 17 mars. Nous attirons votre attention sur les principes suivants :

Que l'on garantisse qu'aucune enseignante ni aucun enseignant ne perde son poste à cause de la mise en oeuvre du nouveau conseil scolaire et qu'elles ou qu'ils ne perdent pas leur droit de rappel dans leur famille d'école ;

Que les enseignantes et les enseignants soient protégés contre toute mutation obligatoire à l'extérieur de leur conseil d'origine jusqu'à la signature de la première convention ;

Que toutes les enseignantes et tous les enseignants aient droit à la même forme de contrat ;

Que toutes les enseignantes et tous les enseignants aient droit à la pleine reconnaissance de leur ancienneté ;

Que le nouveau conseil reconnaisse les congés de maladie accumulés et les crédits de services accumulés pour faire une classification ;

Que l'on accorde aux enseignantes et aux enseignants une pleine reconnaissance quant à leur placement à la grille et à leur expérience ;

Qu'aucune enseignante ni aucun enseignant ne subisse de perte de salaire ;

Que les conventions collectives actuelles soient en vigueur jusqu'à la signature de la première convention.

En plus, j'ai ajouté à la dernière minute cet article qui nous tient très à coeur et qui n'est pas dans votre document :

Que l'ensemble du personnel soit des personnes détenant un BEO, un brevet d'enseignant de l'Ontario, incluant les personnes à la direction, enseignantes et enseignants à la maternelle et au jardin et nos bibliothécaires.

De plus, nos membres, contrairement à nos collègues oeuvrant dans les écoles de langue anglaise, se verront quitter leur employeur actuel et se joindre à une nouvelle entité. Cela s'apparente à ce que nous avons vécu lors du parachèvement des écoles catholiques.

Il est nécessaire de bien ordonner la désignation et le transfert du personnel. En conséquence, les unités de l'AEFO de la région de Windsor et Essex recommandent :

Que le projet de loi 104 soit amendé pour inclure les dispositions de l'article 135 de la Loi sur l'éducation réglementant la désignation et le transfert du personnel.

M. Lachance : Sur la question de l'impartition des services, j'invite M^{me} Framboise à présenter nos réflexions.

M^{me} Marilyn Laframboise : L'école de langue française est le coeur de la culture franco-ontarienne. L'enfant doit se sentir béni et en sécurité dans cette culture, qui est si riche. Chaque membre du personnel a un rôle essentiel à jouer dans la vie de l'enfant.

L'enfant doit être capable de s'exprimer en français avec chaque membre du personnel. De sa part, chaque personne dans l'école doit servir de modèle pour l'enfant. Un personnel stable d'enseignantes et d'enseignants, d'aides-enseignantes et d'aides-enseignants, de concierges, de secrétaires, de personnel de soutien, toutes ces personnes font partie de la famille pour l'enfant franco-ontarien. Nous savons que les enfants s'épanouissent dans un environnement stable où l'enfant sait à quoi s'attendre, où l'enfant se sent en sécurité, un environnement que l'enfant connaît et surtout où l'enfant aime les adultes autour de lui.

Les jeunes enfants surtout développent un amour profond pour les adultes dans leur environnement, et c'est dans cette atmosphère que l'enfant grandit et développe sa confiance. L'importance d'assurer un personnel stable, engagé et dévoué à la culture et à la langue française ne peut être sous-estimée. Chaque service, chaque personne qui oeuvre dans l'école de langue française est lié à l'enseignement et est lié à l'enfant. C'est pourquoi nous proposons la recommandation 9 devant vous, qui est de radier l'article 335(f).

M. Lachance : Un troisième point, et ce point est relié aussi au quatrième, c'est toute la question du financement

de l'éducation. Je suis certain que vous en avez déjà entendu parler à Ottawa et à Sudbury et ailleurs, mais je crois qu'il faut faire le point sur cette question du financement.

On reconnaît que, d'une part, le ministre de l'Éducation nous promet une réforme au niveau du financement pour qu'il soit juste et équitable. On parle de la question d'un «pooling» régional de la taxe commerciale et industrielle. Tout ça, ce sont des gestes dans un bon sens, dans une bonne direction, mais je crois qu'il est important de reconnaître que l'éducation en langue française, tout de même dans les milieux — bien, partout dans la province — coûte plus cher quand on pense uniquement à la question de matériel didactique, matériel pédagogique et les livres, pour ne nommer que ce petit domaine du financement.

Il faut reconnaître aussi que nous sommes dans une région très isolée et que nous desservons des élèves dans de petites écoles, et que les coûts du financement de l'éducation en langue française sont beaucoup plus élevés pour être capables d'offrir la même qualité de service et la même quantité de service auxquelles les élèves des écoles de langue anglaise ont droit.

En tenant compte de ces éléments-là, vous remarquerez quatre recommandations dans notre mémoire, les recommandations de 3 à 6, qui demandent que, d'une part, des modalités de financement pour assurer un financement juste et équitable soient incluses dans la loi ;

Que le droit de taxation au niveau local, tel qu'il nous est garanti par l'article 23 de la Charte et par l'article 93 de la Loi constitutionnelle du Canada, soit maintenu, parce que si on a besoin d'un peu plus d'argent pour financer les programmes et les services qu'on veut offrir, il faut avoir un moyen d'aller le chercher ;

Et de plus, ce qui est le plus important, je crois, des fonds de démarrage pour la création des nouveaux conseils de langue française. Fort de l'expérience d'Ottawa-Carleton, de Toronto et de Prescott-Russell, on voit l'importance d'avoir un financement de démarrage pour être capable de mettre sur pied et pour commencer du bon pied nos conseils de langue française.

J'invite M^{me} Boulet et M^{me} Laframboise de nous parler un peu de l'impact d'un manque de financement quand on pense en termes des services en langue française qu'on doit offrir à nos élèves et à notre population.

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M^{me} Marie-France Boulet : L'école française dans notre région est généralement de petite taille et évolue en milieu minoritaire où le taux d'assimilation est relativement très élevé. La mission de l'école ne saurait être circonscrite à l'intérieur du programme cadre parce que nos étudiants n'ont pas accès en français aux mêmes ressources et à la même qualité de services que les jeunes anglophones de nos communautés.

La plupart de nos élèves vivent à demi dans une autre langue quand ils quittent l'école. Les enseignants sont sensibilisés à la mission particulière de nos services éducatifs ainsi qu'à ces conditions de réalisation. Nous devons promouvoir la langue et la culture auprès des jeunes.

Le budget de nos bibliothèques, que nous nommerons médiathèques, devrait tenir compte du fait que nous

sommes isolés de la francophonie et submergés par la culture américaine, que la sélection des documents disponibles en français dans les bibliothèques publiques est très limitée, dans les librairies, inexistante.

La médiathèque devrait pouvoir enrichir le micromilieu de vie française qu'est l'école, permettre aux jeunes de développer et de perfectionner leur capacité à communiquer et leur permettre aussi de découvrir et promouvoir leur identité culturelle. Pour ce faire, les ressources financières dont nous disposons actuellement sont absolument insuffisantes.

En ce qui me concerne, je parle de l'école secondaire pour la suite de la présentation.

L'avenir de la médiathèque devrait être à la fois celui de pilier et de pivot de l'enseignement, de l'apprentissage et de la vie culturelle. Nous vivons à l'ère de l'information. Celle-ci est, selon les chefs d'entreprise, la ressource la plus importante.

Alors que le travail technique peut être informatisé, les universités canadiennes exigent un baccalauréat pour étudier en science de l'information. Nous devons encourager nos enseignants bibliothécaires à devenir des professionnels de l'information.

Les enseignants bibliothécaires devraient être les mieux placés pour priser notre isolement, connaître les programmes cadres, faire l'acquisition et localiser les ressources documentaires nécessaires aux enseignants et aux élèves. Ils devraient aussi transmettre aux jeunes individus que nous formons une formation à la fine pointe de la technologie en recherche documentaire. Cela leur serait utile face aux nombreux choix qu'ils devront faire au cours de leur vie.

Nous offrons un service de travail social pour les jeunes qui ont des problèmes d'ordre personnel : décrochage, problèmes de comportement etc. C'est un service essentiel, difficile d'accès en français dans les communautés. De plus, ce professionnel travaille en coopération avec les professeurs. Il est bien intégré à notre équipe.

La population de la ville de Windsor et de ses environs est composée d'individus d'origine ethnique diversifiée, notamment de gens arrivés d'Afrique francophone et du Liban, qui ne parlent pas d'anglais. L'inscription des ces élèves dans les cours réguliers place ces étudiants en situation d'échec. La mise sur pied, la gestion et l'enseignement de cours de base en anglais est ici nécessaire et doit être assumée par un enseignant.

Nos écoles desservent aussi des gens qui ont des difficultés d'apprentissage particulières. L'enseignant responsable du programme d'enfance en difficulté travaille avec les élèves inscrits au programme, les enseignants en charge des classes que fréquentent ces élèves et leurs parents. Ces tâches sont celles d'un enseignant spécialisé en enfance en difficulté.

Nous desservons aussi des élèves déficients. Ces jeunes sont très peu nombreux, mais nous leur offrons un programme complet qui doit être géré par un enseignant qui, encore une fois, travaille avec les élèves inscrits au programme, leurs aides-enseignants, leurs enseignants et leurs parents. Ces tâches sont celles d'un enseignant spécialisé en enfance en difficulté, si possible aidé d'un psychopédagogue.

Nous croyons que la pastorale est une composante essentielle de l'école catholique et un complément à la formation acquise dans les cours qui doit être animée par une personne qualifiée, dans le but de permettre à l'élève d'exprimer, de vivre et d'expérimenter complètement sa foi.

Les services d'orientation, lien entre l'école secondaire et l'avenir, ont un effet énorme sur toute la vie des élèves. Les orienteurs, qui ont généralement plusieurs années d'expérience en enseignement, ont les compétences nécessaires pour comprendre, aider et conseiller les jeunes qui soient confrontés à des difficultés dans leur apprentissage, détenteurs d'habiletés et de talents particuliers qui n'aiment pas l'école et souhaitent fréquenter l'université. Ces enseignants jouent un rôle de premier plan à des moments importants dans la vie des étudiants, et des services équivalents n'existent pas, dans notre communauté, en français. Merci.

M. Lachance : Je sais que le temps est presque écoulé. M^{me} Boulet a tout simplement fait un inventaire bien simple de l'ensemble des services qu'on doit offrir, bien souvent à de petits groupes, de petites populations isolées partout dans le sud-ouest. De là l'importance d'un financement adéquat et juste et équitable pour qu'on puisse offrir la même qualité d'éducation et de services à nos élèves.

On a pris le projet de loi dans son sens, dans la mesure où on a la gestion de nos écoles de langue française, mais on recherche, par les recommandations que vous avez dans notre mémoire, des modifications afin de l'améliorer pour assurer pour l'ensemble de nos élèves francophones du sud-ouest une éducation de qualité. Je vous remercie beaucoup de votre attention.

La Présidente : Je regrette qu'il n'y a jamais le temps nécessaire, mais je vous remercie de votre participation et des réflexions que vous avez données ce soir.

GERARD CHARETTE
BETH WARREN
RICK MACDONALD

The Chair: Mr Gerard Charette, welcome. It's good to see you. I know you've been here most of the day. As you start, I hope you'll introduce your co-presenters, whom we've seen before.

Mr Gerard Charette: Thank you. My name is Gerard Charette. As you might anticipate, in the interest of hearing parents who are dramatically involved in education having their say here, with the permission of the Chair, I have the privilege of giving Mr Macdonald and Ms Warren here the chance of finishing their presentation, which in my view was quite a wonderful presentation that was given this morning. I'll just be a few minutes, if I may.

I am generally in support of this government, as people in the community know. I am the parent of a 17-year-old daughter at one of our Roman Catholic high schools, I have two brothers who teach in the separate school system and I have two who teach at universities and colleges. I am a director of Ontario's television education authority, popularly known as TVO, and I have recently had the privilege of being appointed to be a member of

the expert panels assembled by the Ministry of Education and Training to help develop a curriculum for high schools. I'm in the midst of spending about seven full days on curriculum development as a volunteer parent from among volunteers drawn from across the province. I spend quite a bit of time on education issues on a volunteer basis.

The committee was initially concerned about the issue of amalgamation. Those concerns were swept away when it became evident to me that the government intended to remove property tax assessments from the purview of local school boards. I was quite concerned initially that larger school boards would tend to outspend themselves even more than they do now, and now I am very much in support of the bill in terms of amalgamation.

I think school boards ought to be returned to their original function, geared towards quality in education. I support the idea of volunteerism. I do not believe that school board trustees should view their work as a paying job. All the time I spend on education is spent as a volunteer. I don't expect to get marks or money for it. I just think it's something we ought to be doing for the good of our community. I am very grateful that the bill seeks to re-emphasize the role of parents as participants in our education system. With that, I'm going to turn it over to Rick and to Ms Warren and let them finish off the allotted time, if I may.

2050

Mrs Beth Warren: As I was about to say —

The Chair: A few hours ago.

Mrs Warren: A few hours ago. That's all right; we understand your time constraints.

The parents of the elementary parent advisory committee of the Essex County Roman Catholic Separate School Board don't know if amalgamation will be good for our kids or not. We don't know if reduction of trustees and the other changes that are being made will be good for our kids or not. We're here today to talk to you about what we do know.

We do know, first of all, that the clause in Bill 104 that states that all provisions of the EIC are final and cannot be reviewed or questioned by a court of law is scaring the heck out of us — not just out of teachers' unions; it's scaring the heck out of parents too. Maybe down here we have a little more faith in Dave Cooke, I don't know, but we trust Dave Cooke and we would like to trust that the EIC will do its job properly, that it will consult with all the parties involved beforehand and get it right so there won't be any problems after. But we strongly recommend that this clause be removed from the bill. It will only slow down the process of education reform. Our kids can't afford to wait while every decision of the EIC is challenged. Whether you say it can be challenged or not, it will be. That's our first recommendation.

Secondly, we are concerned about the clause in Bill 104 that talks about giving the EIC the ability or the power to discuss how to promote the outsourcing of non-instructional services rather than whether to outsource. Every parent at our last EPAC meeting knows how important every adult, every person who comes into the school, is to our children. We have a lot of very valid concerns about the outsourcing of support staff. We hope

that clause in the bill, if it must remain, can at least be changed to "whether to outsource" and please allow the individual boards a little flexibility.

Thirdly, you've probably been listening, not only today but at all the other hearings you've attended, to all the things about this bill that will not work. We tried to take a different approach. We tried to treasure-hunt. We think we've found a pearl in Bill 104. That's everything that has to do with parental involvement. We passionately believe that the EIC should create opportunities for parents or parent representatives to be active partners in developing all board policies which will directly involve or affect their children. Please allow parents to be part of any amalgamation, any education reform. Give us the chance to tell you what we feel passionately about before, rather than saying: "This is the package. Live with it." We can help.

Secondly, we think school councils are great. We represent an area of the province where school councils, whatever you call them, have worked for between 10 and 25 years. We're not just talking about bingos. We want to get out of the bingo parlours. We're talking about all the other constructive, positive things that we have contributed to education in Essex county, to our board. We believe that you have to give parents the tools they need to remain vital partners in the education system. What we are recommending is, please do not stop at school councils. I don't know if you've caught on to what EPAC is all about, but EPAC is a second-tier parent council where a representative from each school in our community has direct access to board administration, trustees, teacher reps and principal reps. We meet once a month. We talk, we help and we share concerns and ideas. To show you how passionately we believe in this second-tier parent council, we have put over 50 hours of preparation time into this presentation. That's why we're back tonight. We want to trust and believe that you will read the report but we know how tired you are and we know that the clock is ticking.

We have to get across to you how valuable parents can be but they have to have the tools, and a second-tier parent council like EPAC would be a very valuable tool in any school board. Granted, in large boards that cover a big territory you may have to get creative with telecommunications. That's not my expertise, but there has to be a way of getting parents to be able to talk to each other from different schools and to their school boards.

Finally, we believe passionately that a permanent position should be created on every newly amalgamated school board or on existing school boards, if that's the way that it's going to stay, so that if you do create this second-tier parent council, and we think it's extremely valuable, there should be a place on every school board for a representative from that second-tier parent council. That person's one and only agenda would be the kids.

We know that trustees have to take into account the concerns of all taxpayers, but we believe the people who are living the challenges that are facing families today are the ones who not only need to have the input, but are the ones in a position to really help bring about effective change.

Mr Rick Macdonald: I brought my stopwatch tonight. I know you folks are definitely at the end. I'm finishing off on the conclusions. One dramatic point is that we are actively involved.

If you take at look at this slide, our school councils in the county, 19 school councils, have invested close to \$1 million in the last few years in the basic system: libraries, computers, the stuff that's essential, safety, play equipment, fencing to keep kids from running out on the streets.

The next thing I want you to take a look at: You see these portables here? There are four rows of portables here, roughly four in each row. There are more portables here and this is the school. There are portables on the other side of the school.

When I got involved in school councils, I didn't realize this but this is a school that has been built, this section from here to here, which is the left side of the school — this is the sign you just saw. This is the front, right over to here. That's where I just finished off. It goes all the way back, which includes two gymnasiums and classrooms. The parents solely built this section of this school, to the tune of \$5 million. Not a penny came out of the board coffers of this school to build it. That's the dedication of our parents and of our school councils in this area.

We move on and talk about what we should be as partners in this. Some parents are afraid to say that we should be active partners. We should be active partners. I'm not promoting the deliberate downloading of funding to the school councils. I want to get out of the smoky bingo halls. I'm tired of it. We do it all the time. But should we be forced to be spending this kind of money? Come up with equitable funding. Get us out of the fund-raising. Restructure our educational funding so that our parents can spend less time raising money and can refocus their attention on educational issues and supporting their kids.

The role of parents in school councils should not have to include raising funds to build schools, supply textbooks or stock libraries. We must be allowed to vote our preferences and concerns when it comes to important topics like staff selection, pupil-teacher ratios, curriculum development and student codes of conduct, with the expectation that our ideas will be respected and acted on accordingly. School councils must be entrenched into the legislation as active partners in our educational system.

I appreciate your patience in hearing us for a second time tonight. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs Warren and Mr Macdonald, and to you, Mr Charette, for making the time available to them. We appreciate it.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is our last presentation in Windsor. Just a couple of items before we leave. I think Mr Skarica wants to table some —

Mr Skarica: I'm tabling a series of responses to the questions that have been put to the ministry through myself. The questions that haven't been answered have been referred and the responses will be forwarded tomorrow, if I could file those at this time.

The Chair: I'd like some advice from the committee. These answers run some 41 pages. To get them photocopied here at the hotel would be a significant expense.

Could I suggest that we make one copy per caucus? Would that be an agreeable solution? All right? We can do the rest on our return to Queen's Park.

Mr Wildman: We can read them on the bus tomorrow morning.

The Chair: We can arrange for recitations if you like.

Mr Duncan: I just want to advise members of the government and the third party that there is a reason why

Casino Windsor makes \$1 million a day, if anybody's planning to go over there tonight.

The Chair: That's very helpful, Mr Duncan, considering that we're worried about spending \$10 per copy for our photocopying.

Thank you all very much. We will meet again tomorrow in Brantford at 11 am. We are adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 2102.

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| Mr Toni | Skarica (Wentworth North / -Nord PC) |

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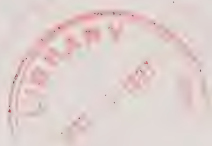
Mardi 25 mars 1997

**Standing committee on
social development**

**Comité permanent des
affaires sociales**

Fewer School
Boards Act, 1997

Loi de 1997 réduisant
le nombre de conseils scolaires



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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Tuesday 25 March 1997

Mardi 25 mars 1997

The committee met at 1104 in the Brantford Seniors' Centre, Brantford.

FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 RÉDUISANT
LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Consideration of Bill 104, an Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système, en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

The Chair (Ms Annamarie Castrilli): Ladies and gentlemen, welcome. This is our last day of hearings on Bill 104 and we'd like to start very promptly so that we can hear everyone's views in a timely fashion. We start with the Welland County Roman Catholic School Board, Mr Di Ianni.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Madam Chair, I am going to delay our beginning for just a few moments because I want to deal with the issue of the responses that were tabled for us yesterday, the responses to the questions that we have been raising at committee. I'm not going to take issue with the nature of the responses, although I would dearly love to, because many of the responses are non-responses and in fact are political drafts in order to support some of the statements that have been made by the government in the past.

I recognize that it's absolutely futile to raise my concerns in those areas, although it's tempting today because of the front-page story in the *Globe and Mail* that suggests the opposition was wrong in thinking there would be \$1 billion taken out of education in the funding formula, that it's actually going to be \$1.5 billion. It is rather tempting to want to challenge answers that suggest, as this one does, that we're going to refocus resources on students and teachers in the classroom, but I will leave that in the interests of time and getting on with our hearings.

There are two or three areas, though, in which the answer to the question begs the question and I do want to ensure that I can get the information I had requested. One of those is the answer to question 36, and it has to do with the transfer of responsibility for school construction, maintenance and busing to the municipalities. I have a bit of a dissertation in the answer as to whether they might consider doing this, but what I really had asked for in that question was the board-by-board costs of those particular functions, including the five-year capital forecasts.

The Chair: Mr Skarica, would you like to respond?

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): I will do my best to obtain that. Is the ministry person here? If you could see what you can do, thank you.

The Chair: Bearing in mind that we start clause-by-clause tomorrow, I wonder if I can impose on the answer being here by the end of today.

Mrs McLeod: I am still hoping, Madam Chair, that our committee will have an opportunity to meet with the EIC, should this legislation be passed, and that kind of information may still be relevant at that time.

My second question is that in answer to the question I had raised about the range of salaries paid to trustees across the province, I appreciate the answer that was given and the breakdown in terms of the range and how many boards are at a particular level of salaries, but I notice that the total remuneration costs for trustees of major school boards across Ontario are about \$19 million. If memory serves me correctly, and I do not have the report with me, the Ernst and Young report done for the ministry suggested that you could save \$23 million on trustees' salaries through the amalgamation. That may not be accurate, but I would like to have the total remuneration figure of \$19 million compared to the savings estimates that were in the Ernst and Young report.

Mr Skarica: Likewise — maybe just obtain the Ernst and Young report.

Mrs McLeod: My third area of concern was on question 12 of the ones that I had tabled. The question was worded, "What approaches will be taken to manage the harmonization in the human resources area?" The answer that was given was essentially that the EIC would be working with local groups to look at harmonization issues.

The question that I had really wanted answered was, what financial resources is the ministry putting into both the harmonization of services and personnel? That would include estimates of severance costs and a building into the budget of severance costs.

I am debating whether I should ask for — I'm not sure I will ask for it, given the fact that this is the last day of

our hearings, but I am dismayed that in asking, as one of my colleagues did, for the grant reductions and the tax increases board by board, what we have been given is not the percentage grant reduction of every board, but the grant reduction as a percentage of its operating expenditure. Obviously the ministry has been asked to very carefully calculate on a board-by-board basis the minister's way of presenting the grant figures, but that was not what we had asked for.

The Chair: Did you want to resubmit the question in a clarified form?

Mrs McLeod: I'm assuming the ministry has that information because that's normally how the information is presented. In fact, I think some of us saw initial information like that when the grants were originally announced. I don't need it for tomorrow but I would still like the information: the grant reduction as a percentage of the total grant the previous year.

The other two things I will just note for the record.

The Chair: Could I ask Mr Skarica to respond.

Mr Skarica: If that information is available, I'll attempt to get it to you. I will get it to you if it's available.

Mrs McLeod: That's fine. There are two things that I would simply like to note for the record because I know they will be a subject of debate in clause-by-clause and I'm sure will be a subject of ongoing concern if these areas are not amended tomorrow.

The first is that in response to a question I raised about why the Education Improvement Commission continues to exist for four years when the new amalgamated boards are supposed to be in place for January 1, 1998, one of the answers I've been given is that the commission would stay in place to monitor the next trustee election process in November of the year 2000. I cannot believe that any government would put in place an arm's-length body which is going to stay in place to monitor a democratic process of elections three years after these new boards are supposedly in place and functioning.

1110

The second answer that I want to note for the record is in relationship to the guarantees of governance for separate school ratepayers, the concern that the separate school trustees' association raised in relationship to the change from the current act to what is in Bill 104 and the fact that it's significantly different in that the new bill simply provides the protection that the charter would provide. The answer from the ministry makes it very clear that the new subsection would no longer apply to statutory rights of separate school supporters. I believe that's a very important issue for separate school supporters and should be the focus of debate tomorrow.

The Chair: Are you just putting those on the record?

Mrs McLeod: Yes.

The Chair: Very well. Mr Wildman.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have three areas of concern that I would like to raise. The one is sort of overarching, but the other two are important.

First, in regard to the answers to the questions that were provided yesterday, in question 4 I asked if Mr Skarica could clarify whether it was possible under the terms of Bill 104 to increase the total number of boards

being proposed. In other words, could the committee amend in such a way as to actually increase the number of boards from the 66 that is proposed? This was particularly as a result of what we heard in eastern Ontario and northern Ontario, where a number of boards and other presenters made it clear that they thought the areas were too large and that it would be better to follow the Sweeney report, which in a number of cases had proposed that there be more boards.

The answer that was tabled yesterday goes on for almost three pages but it doesn't really say anything until the last sentence, which says the ultimate decision about whether the number of school boards can be changed, or whether the school board boundaries can be changed, rests with the government.

I don't know why you went on for three pages, but my question is — and obviously on this committee there is a majority representing the government party. I guess my question really was, does this committee have a mandate to amend the bill, if necessary, in a way that will respond to the concerns of presenters about the size of the new board jurisdictions? The answer, which says the ultimate decision rests with government, still needs to be clarified. Does that mean it rests with the minister and cabinet, or can this committee make recommendations or amendments that will be accepted by the government?

The Chair: Are you submitting a new question, Mr Wildman?

Mr Wildman: I'm asking for clarification on that.

Mr Skarica: It's my understanding that after Mr Cooke investigates the board situations, including what we hear in this committee hearing, he will make recommendations to the minister and then there will be a decision made by the government; that means cabinet.

Mr Wildman: All right.

The Chair: Is there a second area?

Mr Wildman: In question 21, I asked of Mr Skarica whether businesses would be able to direct their taxes to the education system of their choice, since the commercial-industrial assessment and taxation will still help to fund education. The answer is that the support which businesses will continue to provide to education will be reviewed by a panel of business representatives to be announced shortly.

I guess that tells us they're reviewing it but they don't have the answer. I find this interesting when we look at the story on the front page of today's paper quoting sources from the Ministry of Education and Training, which says that Ontario intends to alter the school funding formula so that it can take \$1.5 billion out of the education system. Up to now, I've been quoting Mr Snobelen as saying he wanted to take \$1 billion out of the school system, and on occasion that's been questioned by members of this committee saying, "Well, Mr Snobelen never said that." Now we have a source in the Ministry of Education that obviously has been working on the project on funding which says the ministry intends to take \$1.5 billion out of education. So I guess they were right when they said Mr Snobelen didn't say \$1 billion; he really meant \$1.5 billion.

I really need to have this clarified and I honestly believe we need to know where the government is going

on funding before we can decide in a rational way what our position is with regard to the passage of Bill 104.

Mr Skarica: I can tell you I've never heard that \$1.5 billion figure before this morning's paper and that the funding model is not being developed with a cost savings target in mind. So where that \$1.5 billion came from I have no idea. I've never, ever heard that number before today's paper. It's complete speculation.

Mr Wildman: Just one supplementary question to that, and then my main issue. Can we be assured that if the government intends to take education off the residential property tax, \$5.4 billion, the total \$5.4 billion will be returned to education in grants under the new funding formula?

Mr Skarica: It's my understanding that for the first year that's the case, I can't speak beyond that.

Mr Wildman: Mr Snobelen has said there will be further cuts in 1998.

Mr Skarica: I can only say that my knowledge is that for the first year that's not going to occur.

Mr Wildman: The overall question, Chair, is essentially: What are we doing here today? Here we are in Brantford to hear presentations from interested parties about Bill 104, and according to the time allocation motion that the government introduced, which constrains the time that the Legislature has to consider this legislation, we have to deal with clause-by-clause and all amendments that might be proposed tomorrow. That means we have to have the amendments tabled with the committee by 9 am tomorrow. That means all of us who are considering amendments based on our position and the position put forward by presenters have already prepared our amendments and they are being completed today. So that essentially means the people here are completely disfranchised. Their proposals, their presentations, will make no difference one way or the other in what amendments might be proposed in the committee tomorrow, since the work is already being done. So it's a hoax on these people that we're having hearings here in Brantford today.

Mr Skarica: That's not true, Mr Wildman. I report to the minister's office every day after the hearings, and that will be done today as well.

The Chair: Mrs McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: I will not delay long.

The Chair: Thank you. I would appreciate that.

Mrs McLeod: I do want to suggest to Mr Skarica, though, that I think his legal training is standing him in good stead today, because he knows full well that the funding formula does not apply in this first year, when there are to be no cuts, and that the cuts could well be incorporated in the funding formula that the ministry is to bring out for next year.

I want to share with the people who are here that Mr Wildman and I are both extremely concerned about the time allocation formula that forces us into clause-by-clause amendments tomorrow and leaves us with only the period of 1 o'clock to 5 o'clock to debate all of the changes and concerns that have been proposed to us in the course of these committee hearings. Having said that, however, I know we can still make last-minute amendments this evening and are prepared to do that before we

submit them at 9 o'clock tomorrow. It doesn't take away the force of having four hours to deal with the concerns that we've heard in the committee hearings.

But the question I want to raise — and I was remiss, Madam Chair, in saying one of the issues I raised I didn't want to table a question on. I do want for tomorrow to know specifically what statutory rights the ministry considers itself to have rescinded with the change in the wording of the protection in Bill 104.

Mr Skarica: I'm not sure I understand the question.

Mrs McLeod: The ministry's answer to my question about the change in the protection of separate school governance rights indicates that it no longer applies to statutory rights. I want to determine what statutory rights are therefore lost.

The Chair: I'd like to wrap up this session by noting that there are three questions that were tabled this morning and there are three as yet unanswered. I would refer the ministry to questions 14 and 15 of March 17 and 20, and there's question 9 which was submitted before. In the interests of fairness, in order for the committee to be able to do its job, all answers really should be here by the end of our hearings today so at least you have the opportunity as committee members to review them and be in a position to go to clause-by-clause tomorrow fully prepared. I would impress that upon the parliamentary assistant and on the ministry, to be able to do that.

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Mr Skarica: I consider that to be a reasonable request and I'll do my best.

The Chair: I would also just bring to the notice of the committee that there was a response tabled that you have from the research officers with respect to the collective bargaining for non-teaching staff which was asked yesterday.

One final thing: You also have in front of you a package of all the written exhibits that were submitted prior to our deadline for written submissions, which was March 20, for your perusal today and overnight.

With that, I beg the indulgence of the audience and —

Mr Wildman: We'll read them tonight and prepare amendments.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Wildman. Perhaps you'll prepare an executive summary.

WELLAND COUNTY ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD

The Chair: I call upon the Welland County Roman Catholic School Board, Mr Angelo Di Ianni.

As Mr Di Ianni comes forward, I want to say just one brief word to the audience and the committee members. There will be positions taken during the course of the hearings that not everybody around the table and in the audience will agree with. In the interests of fairness and participatory democracy we allow everyone to have their say without interruption and without harassment. I ask for your cooperation in this in order that everyone can have a full hearing.

Mr Angelo Di Ianni: Before I begin, I would like to describe for the members here the process that led us to this presentation. This is a document that's been approved

by our board. As you know, boards are made up of a variety of people with a variety of ideas. I will also tell you that during our discussion we certainly took into consideration Mr Wildman's assertions and fears that indeed our presentations would fall on deaf ears or minds that would be made up. We hope that's not the case, but certainly that was a concern of the board.

The other issue that leads me to make a comment right now is the comments made by Lyn McLeod that certainly were part of our consideration in supporting Bill 104. Our intention of support was linked to the preservation of all rights, including statutory rights, so that certainly will be a matter for discussion at our next meeting, which is soon.

In any case, you have copies, and I hate to read what is already in front of you, but I understand that's the process.

Mr Wildman: You don't have to.

Mr Di Ianni: I don't have to? Great. If I don't have to, I will read certain highlights and then skip, because I'm sure it would be appreciated by all.

As you can see, the first section on page 1 —

The Chair: I'm not sure where the copies are. Do you have a copy?

Mr Wildman: I have a copy.

The Chair: Thank you. Copies are being made. Unfortunately, the photocopier is a little slow, so the clerk is doing the best she can to get us copies. I would ask you to share in the interim, or pay very close attention to Mr Di Ianni.

Mr Di Ianni: It has been noticed that I don't look like an Arlene Atherton. Our chair could not be here for family emergency reasons. I apologize for that.

Page 1 has to do with funding. You will notice that by and large we are in support of Bill 104, with certain understandings: that the funding model will ensure equal education opportunity; that designation of taxes must continue through the process of enumeration. We also talk about employees and a fairness to people who have made a career and a mission in working with our school systems and all of a sudden find themselves not part of the future. We're very concerned about social justice.

We also support the issue that Catholic school boards must continue to be represented by Catholic teachers' federations, and we emphasize the distinctive educational mission that these groups have. We also emphasize local autonomy as much as possible. It must allow for flexibility and discretionary spending by Catholic school boards to allow them to maintain, foster and develop the specific and distinctive education offered by Catholic schools.

Under "Constitutional Rights" we make the claims that are very familiar to you, and I would add as well that the issue of statutory rights once again will be of concern to us as it becomes clarified. The position of our board could shift drastically if that is the case.

School board amalgamations: You should know that our board, together with the Lincoln board that has been designated to amalgamate, has studied amalgamation voluntarily over a period of time. We have integrated many of the services. We certainly welcome that amalgamation. We did not support the proposed amalgamation by the Sweeney report, which linked us to Brant county

— Brantford, for example. We didn't think that was reasonable. However, we do emphasize that, as you can see, affinities created by economics, culture, history, faith and religious denomination should also be factors that should be respected.

Again, we also support French-language education.

We move on to trustee honoraria. Our trustees pride themselves in saying that they've worked without an honorarium for many years. They believe that quality trustees would also come forward without an honorarium and they challenge the government and you people to examine that if the honorarium is the issue, the small amount of money that can be saved with the trustees not be done at the expense of not having enough trustees to represent the various jurisdictions.

When we get to electoral issues, we focus on that. We need an adequate number of trustees, and I ask you to look at the appendix that describes all the municipalities that would come together under the new district board. You will notice that if we apply the existing formula, we would have eight trustees; St Catharines would have two trustees; Niagara Falls, two; Thorold, one; Welland, one; and the rest of the municipalities would have no representation. So the issue is, if you wish to save money or at least fix the amount that can be spent on trustees, then allow the local boards to determine the number of trustees with that fixed amount in mind so that no one, no section of the jurisdiction, would feel underrepresented.

As far as the Education Improvement Commission, we further suggest that such representation be extended to other bodies dealing with governance. In other words, we're talking about fairness in membership on the soon-to-be-approved — at least it's thought so — Education Improvement Commission. Catholics need to be represented, francophones need to be represented etc.

As far as the powers of the commission, again I would like to pick up on the comments that were made during our board meetings as to the need for the commission to continue to exist once the new boards are in power. That is something we would like you to consider.

Our board supports the position of the Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association that cabinet be given the power to make regulations imposing fair and non-discriminatory criteria on the exercise of the commission's approving and amending jurisdiction over school board budgets. It's such an open-ended issue for our board that we're saying, "Sure we can see it working, but let's have some regulations that would guarantee us certain responsibilities and powers at the local level."

The timing issue: We're getting fairly close to an election in the fall of this year. Our trustees basically are saying, "Let's not do things improperly by having a haste that indeed is politically expedient but not necessarily good for our organizations." We're asking that if we're not ready to implement, let's delay. There's no real issue with us. We can certainly continue to work together with our adjacent board, Lincoln separate, in integrating services, as we've done in the past, and we would be better ready to implement if a year delay were granted.

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In conclusion, while the Welland County Roman Catholic School Board is supportive of much of the

overall education program, we cannot overemphasize the importance of respect for the constitutional rights of Catholic schools, for equity of funding, and for social justice principles.

On behalf of the Welland County Roman Catholic School Board, we express our thanks and appreciation to you for hearing the presentation of our concerns this morning.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Di Ianni. We have two minutes per caucus for questions.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate your noting of a number of concerns, including the adequacy of the number of trustees for the area and the concern about governance which, as you say, I had raised earlier. You've also noted the concern for the designation of commercial taxes, and as you may have heard from the response that Mr Wildman was noting, there are no guarantees in this legislation that that is going to continue.

The question I'd like to ask you is in another area of concern which is in the bill but is very much related to it in terms of the ministry taking over 100% funding and in return for that having to find something they can give back to the municipal property tax base. As you know, the current discussion is that school construction, maintenance and school busing would all be transferred as a responsibility to the municipalities. I understand the separate school trustees' association has expressed some very great concern about that and I wonder if you would comment on that in terms of what the impact of that would be on school governance and school management in your system.

Mr Di Ianni: As far as we are concerned, that move would be ill advised, and we lack faith in our municipal brothers and sisters to administer any better than we do those issues. As far as governance is concerned, we would be very much concerned in a separate school system where we suddenly don't have as many buildings, as much capital, as the public school system. Then we would have one more hurdle to overcome in achieving fair housing for our students.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much for your presentation. I guess I have a two-barrelled question. I agree with your comments, by the way, on timing. I don't know what the rush is other than I guess they want to get the money out next year. But my question is really about the preservation of statutory rights and the sort of wait-and-see attitude that the separate school boards have taken, holding in abeyance, as it were, your constitutional rights. I note you say the designation of taxes must continue through the process of enumeration. We asked a question on that and, as Mrs McLeod said, we don't have any confirmation of how that's to be done.

I'm not a lawyer, but aren't you concerned about the holding in abeyance of your constitutionally protected rights to a school system of conscience?

Mr Di Ianni: We're certainly very worried, very concerned. We are taking, as you know, a wait-and-see attitude towards that particular issue and we're watching very carefully as it unfolds.

However, we have this problem, and the problem is one of chronic underfunding. In our jurisdiction, just to give you some specifics about Welland county, we are

able to spend approximately \$900 less per student at the secondary level than our coterminous public school board. We're able to spend approximately \$300 less per student at the elementary level than our coterminous public school board. It doesn't take a calculator to figure out the millions of dollars that we are not able to dedicate to instruction as a result of that uneven funding in our area, and it's reflected right across Ontario.

Therefore, in the hope that the new formula will provide the equity that the minister has been talking about across the province, we are saying that is a primary target for us and we will reserve judgement on the other issues, but certainly that's one of the motivating factors at this point. We're definitely very concerned about constitutional rights and we will be increasingly concerned if indeed it comes to pass that the announcements that would be made by government would also touch statutory rights.

Mr Skarica: Sir, I want to refer to page 3. You made a unique submission there that perhaps the \$5,000 honorarium should be reduced. We've heard on a number of occasions that it should be lifted, and the argument has been that you'll discourage quality people from being a trustee if the honorarium is too low. I might note that trustees in boards representing 75% of the boards make under \$10,000 at the present time. So my question simply is, if the honorarium was under \$5,000, would that discourage people from running and perhaps disqualify quality people from being trustees?

Mr Di Ianni: Mr Skarica, in reflecting the various opinions of the board I will tell you that there are a few trustees who believe that, but the majority of trustees clearly agreed that it would not be an issue in their minds. If Arlene Atherton had been here, and Mike Parent, our past chair, they would tell you that they were trustees who received no honoraria and it would not be an issue for them.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Di Ianni. It's been a pleasure to see you again. As always, you're direct and forthright.

LONDON COUNCIL OF HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

The Chair: May I call upon the London Council of Home and School Associations: Janet Andruchon, Marguerite Fortune and Sharon Watson. Good morning and welcome to our committee. We're delighted to have you here.

Mrs Marguerite Fortune: Good morning. I am Marguerite Fortune, and with me is Sharon Watson. We are the co-presidents of the London Council of Home and School Associations. We appreciate this opportunity to share our thoughts and recommendations with you on Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act.

We had hoped that everybody who wished to was given the opportunity to present to this committee. As advocates for public input, it was dismaying to realize that we were on a lottery system to speak today. We have brought a formal brief that we hope you will take time to read, although I understand it could be a challenge that you have it read by tomorrow. This is the first time in a

long time that we, as home-and-schoolers, have had to paraphrase our remarks to remain within the allotted time.

Our criterion for our response has always been: Is it the best for each student? We were at the London Board of Education's overview of Bill 104 and it was stated that the bill in itself does not have hard-hitting points to which we can openly object. But Bill 104 is the doorway for many changes to the educational system. We are compelled to ask: What are the changes that will be forthcoming as a result of this bill? What will the benefits be for our students, children and teachers?

Bill 104 does not address the planned changes to the funding process, nor does the bill specify how the transition is to be accomplished.

We believe that educational finance reform and educational programming must occur simultaneously with the reform on education governance. How do we support the proposed changes with only half the picture?

Without the funding model, we do not perceive that equity will be achieved. Uniqueness must be appreciated and there must be allowances for the different needs of the student populations. Will there be adequate funding for ESL, adult education, junior kindergarten, special education, safety issues and so on?

We recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training propose now those programs that will be core. The public needs to know what funding will be available for programs. The stability of our students' education demands it. The quality of our students' programs must not suffer. Will the government allocate funding? Without the option of raising money in the community, how do communities support the programs that are important to them? For example, London's Beal art and fashion program is world-renowned. It should be a program that is celebrated. However, how do you support equity in a program that may not be accessible to all the students in our new board?

Although the Fewer School Boards Act does not deal with the issue, it is the policy of the OFHSA that there should be one publicly funded school system in the province of Ontario. We do not understand the government's hesitation to implement one publicly funded school system. We believe that one system can address the uniqueness of religion, language and culture.

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We question the size of the proposed new district school boards: 33 public district school boards for 1.5 million students, 33 separate district school boards for only 0.5 million students.

Yes, change can be beneficial and more efficient, but we are not convinced that the proposed changes are the most responsible way of doing things. It appears unfeasible that adequate coverage both in personnel and trustees can be provided for the proposed Middlesex, London, Oxford, Elgin district school board. We have yet to pick a shorter name for it, so we're going with the whole thing. Will there actually be a saving or will the expense of doing business go sky-high? How do we as involved parents manage to contact our board administrations or trustees? Will there be a 1-800 number?

Mr Wildman: 1-800-TRUSTEE.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Think of the fund-raising that would mean.

Mrs Fortune: We recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training reconsider the alignment of the district school boards.

The three proposed district school boards — Toronto, Peel, and Middlesex, London, Oxford, Elgin — would serve the same population as 57 boards in the province of Alberta. LCHSA recommends that the alignment of district school boards be more conducive to adequate representation.

What will Ontarians lose by minimizing the role of the school board trustee? Will school boards become ministry branch offices, little more than complaint bureaus for the provincial government? If trustees' roles are to continue to represent the public interest and to act as advocates for students, parents and other community members, they must continue to be empowered to make decisions for effective delivery of education services.

We question whether the best volunteers will stand for election by the placing of an unrealistic ceiling on the trustee honorarium. We believe a trustee whose jurisdiction is excessively large will be less able to participate in local education decision-making.

LCHSA does understand and appreciates the proposals in Bill 104 for qualifications for trustees to reduce potential conflicts of interest. Potential conflicts of interest, particularly personnel issues, have always caused an imbalance of workloads for trustees. We want those trustees who are dedicated to the education of our students and capable of fulfilling their duties. However, we do question whether there will be a similar provision for those candidates for a municipally elected office.

LCHSA recommends reconsideration of the honorarium for trustees and that qualifications for elected school board trustees be parallel and equal to municipal elected office.

Mrs Sharon Watson: As Londoners we are very proud of the employees of the board of education; as home-and-schoolers the relationship we have with our schools is exceptional. Bill 104 states that the Education Improvement Commission will "consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on how to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards." Will this serve our students better?

Every elementary student in a school knows the school custodian by name; every student and many parents know the secretary. These are the friendly faces that our students trust. They are the eyes and ears of our schools. How will a school board ensure the safety of our students if these were to be outsourced? Will a profit-driven company research and be accountable for their employees?

We are assuming that the rationale for creating district school boards is to eliminate duplication of services. As partners with the London Board of Education we question whether there will in fact be duplication. During the past few years the London Board of Education has downsized to the point that we believe all personnel are now vital to our students. In fact we question whether school board administrations can continue to function and fulfil the expectations of the provincial government and the public.

The background information on the release of Bill 104 states that parents will have more say. The OFHSA throughout its 81-year history has advocated parental involvement. That is what home-and-school is all about. In our opinion, every school should have a home-and-school. As members of the largest home and school council in Ontario, we are insulted that this provincial government would see fit to recreate a wheel that was not broken. Is it the government's agenda to alienate parents who have been involved in education for years? How can you legislate parental involvement? We've been dealing with that issue for 81 years. Our experience shows that parents become involved if they so choose. However, a rigid format, such as proposed by Memorandum 122, does not allow much flexibility or work ability. It could become difficult to maintain the representation as proposed.

London council recommends that school councils be advisory in nature only and that the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations be involved in the proposed legislation regarding school councils.

Bill 104 proposes an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition of school boards to district school boards. This commission is autocratic, not democratic. We are outraged that the government felt the necessity to make retroactive the powers of this commission. In London we actively monitor the board of education. We know what the board is doing. We have public input. We do not believe that the London Board of Education will abuse its powers and need a watchdog.

Are you not proposing one bureaucracy for another? Bill 104 states that there will be an Education Improvement Commission, a local education improvement commission, an education improvement committee with all the necessary perks to function. In addition, the EIC will have the ability to hire or appoint those who are required to oversee its mandate. Who will pay for this? To add insult to injury, this commission has unlimited powers. "The decisions of the Education Improvement Commission are final and shall not be reviewed or questioned by a court." Where are the checks and balances to this? Where is democracy? Where is our voice? These are not persons we have elected but persons appointed by the provincial government.

The Minister of Education and Training announced the establishment of the Ontario Parent Council on September 7, 1993, to provide advice on education-related issues. With three existing parent groups and school councils in every school, is this group not now redundant? Home and school has always advised the Ministry of Education and Training. We are a democratically operated organization.

London Council of Home and School Associations recommends that the budget moneys allocated to the OPC be evenly distributed to the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, the Federation of Catholic Parent-Teacher Associations of Ontario and the Fédération des associations de parents francophones de l'Ontario.

Life is always changing. If we did not change, we would become stagnant. However, we caution that the baby is not thrown out with the bathwater. Bill 104 is staggering. Can you prove to us that this will be in the best interests of our children? It is not clear that fewer school boards is the best for each student.

We do not want an education system where parent volunteers will be expected to do a considerable amount of work without compensation, where elected trustees are left powerless and where the province controls many decisions which were made at the community level. We do want equal education for all students. We do want to be involved. If you want to see how parents can be involved, look at the relationship between the London Council of Home and School Associations and the London Board of Education. Let us be part of the solution. Public education is for all students. In summary, we are not able to support Bill 104 because there is insufficient information to form a positive response. Without the full picture, we must remain opposed to this bill.

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Mr Wildman: Thank you very much for your presentation. You've raised a lot of issues like the increased bureaucracy and the lack of local accountability, involvement of parents and so on, but I think you've really touched on the central question, and that is the funding process and the funding formula. Without that we don't know where we're going, and you are suggesting it should be done simultaneously.

I don't know whether you're aware, but there's a report in the press this morning that Ontario is going to alter the school funding formula. A source in the Ministry of Education and Training says the government intends, starting in 1998, I guess, to take another \$1.5 billion out of the education system in Ontario. If that is in fact accurate, what effect do you think it will have on the ability of the school system in your region to meet the needs of students?

Mrs Watson: Our board would definitely have to start looking at programs. I don't think we would be able to meet the needs of our students, to tell you the truth.

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): Thank you, ladies. We heard from a trustee last night in Windsor who believes that the new model of school governance will save millions of dollars and will provide equity across the province. He wasn't surprised himself about the hysteria with which these reforms have been greeted by some of the bureaucrats and that the Ontario Public School Board's Association, to all intents and purposes, is concerned not so much with the quality of education but with preserving the positions of hundreds of unnecessary trustees. Also, he went on to say that the local accountability argument that we've heard so much on this tour is really a joke, that the trustees are only accountable when they want to be, that there's a lot of things that go on behind closed doors. How would you respond to that argument which was brought forward by an actual school trustee?

Mrs Watson: I think the other side of that coin is that people who have the ability to run as a trustee may not have the chance to. We monitor our board meetings pretty closely and we see a lot that's going on. I can't speak for other boards, but I can speak for our board and know that we can see what's going on there.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much. I'm still sort of staggered by the question that was just asked, given the concerns that are being expressed about the government

saying that this legislation is about dollars being freed up to go back to the classrooms to provide for more equitable funding for students' needs.

Let me share with you, first of all, that the government's best estimate of how much could be saved through the process of amalgamation was \$150 million on a \$14-billion budget, and to get that they had to take \$9.9 million right out of classroom supplies and equipment. So right off the bat we don't see that there were dollars going to the classroom. We've always said there was probably going to be \$1 billion taken out of education; now today we see it may be as much as \$1.5 billion. The government says this will lead to more equitable funding to meet the needs of every student. Do you think there is any way, if they take \$1.5 billion out of education, that there can be equitable or fair funding that meets students' needs?

Mrs Fortune: In London I don't know where they would start to make any more cuts. I guess the problem is that not all boards in the province have been as responsible as the London board and some other boards have been. That's probably where things should start, by looking at the boards that haven't been responsible, because not everybody is in the same boat, and that's what's happening. We're all being lumped together where we don't all fit. Our trustees don't make \$35,000 or \$40,000. The problem is that we're being lumped with all the other boards. It's not just London; there are many other boards that have been responsible all the way down the line.

The Chair: Mrs Fortune and Mrs Watson, thanks so much for coming here and taking the time to be with us to present your views.

OXFORD COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: Next is the Oxford County Board of Education, Graham Hart.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, for the record, from the answers that have been tabled for us today, I think the last presenters would be interested in knowing that in 61 boards in the province the trustees make less than \$5,000, and in another 63 they make from \$5,000 to \$10,000. There are in fact only five boards where they make more than \$25,000.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Welcome, Mr Hart. We're happy to have you here.

Mr Graham Hart: Thank you, Madam Chair. We are pleased to be here. I hope the members of the committee have copies of the report that we're giving to you today.

As chair of the Oxford County Board of Education, I should just mention first of all the process by which we have come to our proposal today. We had submissions from school councils and from interested members of the community that made presentations to us, and as a result of that we tried to check and see that most of those concerns were being brought forward through the Ontario Public School Boards' Association or through home and school associations.

As a result, we decided to concentrate and focus today on two particular issues. We had a student last night at

our board meeting who asked a very significant question: What is there in Bill 104 for students? I think that's the fundamental question here today. So we're going to deal with two issues; first, who the Oxford County Board of Education should be partnered with, and second, the issue of trustee representation.

The first page of our report deals with some of the issues of the Oxford County Board of Education. We think it has been unfortunate that the minister has made comments surrounding the bill about the so-called crisis in education. We've laid out here quite clearly that the Oxford County Board of Education is in good shape. We have been downsizing since 1990 in response to community and parent concerns about concentrating expenditures in the classroom. By the ministry's own calculation of expenditures, you'll note there that the Oxford board spent 61% of our expenditure in the classroom and the ministry's criterion or goal was 60%, so we're already surpassing that.

In addition, we launched a public awareness campaign concerning the discrepancy in per pupil expenditures across the province last fall, and we're pleased to see that hopefully Bill 104 addresses some of those issues. But we have the concern that the funding model is not clear and that there isn't a clear idea as to actually what is meant by equity.

We're using the Sweeney report as some of the justification for our submission that Oxford be paired in a different combination. The Sweeney report concluded that the greatest operational efficiencies were found in school boards that were in the area of 5,000 to 55,000 students. As a result of Bill 104, Oxford has been paired with Elgin, Middlesex and London, resulting in a school board of almost 90,000 students. It would become the third largest in the province, and we don't feel there's good rationale for this.

The Sweeney report went on to point out that newly created boards should not exceed 55,000 students, that geographic distances should be kept reasonable so that people could relate to their board offices and trustees and that boards with similar interests should be partnered.

What are some of our concerns? First of all, there's no apparent rationale for some of these amalgamations. There has not been a good explanation provided as to why London, Middlesex, Oxford and Elgin should be joined together.

Second, there's no proof of savings. A \$150-million figure has been mentioned. Again the Sweeney report points out that beyond a certain number of students or size of organization, there are no further savings. Once you get to a certain size of administration, those costs are then straightlined. We're concerned that once you go beyond 55,000 students there will not be savings and indeed there may be costs.

Bringing together four partners is an extremely complex process which could result in higher operating costs due to the sheer size of the board and the number of students who must be served. We've already had several meetings with the ELMO district school board and it's a very complex process because on every issue you have at least five positions on the table. You have each board's present position plus a fifth position, and it's a very difficult and very complicated process.

Reduced influence of trustees: The needs and interests of rural students, parents and communities could easily be lost in a partnership dominated by a significantly larger urban partner. This gets again directly to the issue of the number of trustees. If we work the numbers on the formula, we might only end up with eight trustees for just over 80,000 students, which would likely mean that Oxford, presently with 15,000, might only end up with one trustee or at the very most two. We think that's inappropriate.

I'll also mention that there are no details on the funding model, and we really feel that going into these kinds of significant changes we should have that kind of information. Promises are one thing; reality is another. To adapt a phrase of the 1990s, "Show us the money." If the government does not yet have this part of the plan ready, perhaps the entire educational restructuring proposal should be delayed until we have that information.

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To go into our alternatives then — and we've dealt with two here — first of all is to have the Oxford County Board of Education paired with the Brant County Board of Education, which is a board of similar size and makeup. In the chart of the numbers of students we have, you can see that as a result of that the Brant-Oxford board would have 31,000 students, which we feel would be an appropriate size.

Let me point out that in the bill most of the amalgamations are twinings. Huron is joined with Perth, Kent with Lambton, Essex with Kent and so on. Again, we could support a twinning as an amalgamation that is fairly inexpensive. Possibly there would be some savings to that kind of amalgamation. But we feel that once you go to the larger, four-board conglomeration, there may not be those savings and in fact there are going to be very significant costs.

Let me just point out that we're concerned that 17 boards across the province have not been changed, have not been altered by this bill. They then are not experiencing the costs of amalgamation. The costs of amalgamation are being borne by the taxpayers, the rest of us, and by our students. We think that's unfortunate and unfair.

Our second proposal is to partner Oxford with Haldimand, Norfolk and Brant, which results in a new district school board of four partners but with 48,000 students as opposed to the current proposal, which is over 82,000 students. In the chart you can see the coterminous board in this particular case would result in a student body of 11,000.

We feel that those boards are all of equal size, an equal kind of distribution. They're a nice mix of urban or small town and rural and don't have a large urban partner which is obviously going to dominate the educational scene. Our rationale, again, for these proposals is back to the Sweeney report, which concluded that medium-sized boards offer the best combination of efficiency, effectiveness and closeness to the local community. There is also the political reality that the interests and needs of our students and communities will be better represented in a partnership that would not be dominated by a large, urban partner.

Let me move then just briefly to the issue of trustee representation and try and leave a few minutes for

questions. In a four-board amalgamation, in order to represent the diverse urban and rural interests of each of the former boards, we feel each needs to be represented by a minimum of at least four trustees.

There are 30 years of history in each of these boards. There are significant reasons why you have each of the programs you do. In order to represent that at the table, we feel there has to be a minimum number of trustees. In a pairing situation, I can see where you're going to end up with an equal number of trustees anyway, when you're just joining boards like Huron and Perth together, but if you're getting into a situation of a four-board amalgamation, we feel there has to be a minimum number of trustees.

Also, due to the complexities of combining the four boards into a new district school board, we feel at least 16 trustees would be appropriate. We object to the ceiling that Bill 104 puts on the number of trustees. I think it actually mentions 12, but in fact our calculations would indicate that none of the areas has significant population that they would actually even end up with 12 trustees. A slightly larger trustee representation would provide a stronger voice for parents and students across a very large geographical area.

We respectfully request that the standing committee give serious consideration to our proposals. We've tried to focus on a couple of issues that we feel can be changed within the bill, realizing there are many members of the public who would like to see the bill maybe even thrown out and changed like that, but we're trying to work with the issue of amalgamation, so we've made these submissions for you today. Thank you.

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): Thank you very much, Mr Hart, for your presentation this morning. It's certainly refreshing to have some alternatives posed in the context of the concerns that you might have with the proposals in Bill 104 in general. As well, I think it's important to congratulate you and the other boards for your efforts over the past few weeks in terms of the meetings you've had to deal with transitional issues. Given the observations and challenges that I suspect you've dealt with, in your opinion what would be a realistic time frame for implementation of any proposed amalgamations, given the scale of proposal we have here?

Mr Hart: The easy answer to that is to come back with a question, and that is, when are we going to get the information such as the funding model? If we had some of that kind of information, then we could work along with the fast timetable. That's the difficulty here, that we have too many questions and not enough answers. Certainly in our senior administration we have people who could move quickly along on the timetable if we had more information and more facts as to what's proposed and what's going to happen.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much, Graham. One of the additional complications of the four-board amalgamation that I don't think you mentioned was that London and Middlesex have already been going through a process of amalgamation and it's not fully worked out yet, so we have that complication as well.

You've referenced Sweeney a number of times, and the Sweeney recommendations would have had three two-

board pairings: Haldimand-Norfolk, London-Middlesex and Elgin-Oxford. I'm wondering whether you've proposed a different alternative because you weren't comfortable with the Sweeney recommendations or whether you think that would be just one more board than this government is prepared to consider.

Mr Hart: No. We had discussions with Elgin, and it was a question of what was most appropriate. The difficulty geographically with the Oxford-Elgin combination is that we only share 10 kilometres of border. Elgin is a very long, narrow county. For geographical reasons, it was a problem to join them together. What really happened, when you look at the map, is that they tend to start in Windsor and Toronto and they move towards the middle and they end up with what's left over, and that happens to be the Oxford area. I think that's what happened with ELMO, unfortunately, that they got down to the last and they didn't know what to do with who was left over. We feel the way they've tried to solve that problem is just inappropriate.

Mr Hampton: I want to focus in on the part of your brief where you point out, "Show us the money." This is a copy of today's Globe and Mail. The Globe and Mail says, "Ontario to Alter School Funding," and then it sets out very clearly that the government is looking at, through this new formula, taking out a further \$1.5 billion. What you should note is that the actor who just won the Academy Award won it for the role of saying, "Show me the money." It's pretty clear the Globe and Mail is saying, "Show us the money." What do you think will happen in your schools if another \$1.5 billion is removed from the system, spread across Ontario?

Mr Hart: We were seriously hurt last year. The cuts last year were very significant. We've had to drop the junior kindergarten program, which we certainly did not want to, but we had to because of the costing situation. We are very concerned that if there are any further cuts it would affect things directly in the classroom. Already we feel that we're at a maximum class size that's appropriate for our students. Any further cuts are really not acceptable.

In the proposal, the four-board amalgamation, the difficulty is that, again, we have one partner that's spending significantly more per student, at least \$800 or \$900 per student, has programs like junior kindergarten, had an EIRP payment to 386 employees last year, whereas the Oxford county board downsized by giving pink slips and so on to teachers and custodians and making those kinds of changes. The system is tight and strained right now and I don't think can accept any more cuts.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Chairman Hart. We appreciate the time you took to come to our committee.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): Perhaps we can discuss this at the end of the day, but I would move that the standing committee on social development ask the Ministry of Education to respond specifically to the alternative proposals that have been put forward by the delegation that just spoke, the Oxford County Board of Education.

The Chair: You mean with respect to —

Mr Duncan: — to the geographic boundaries.

The Chair: The different amalgamation of them. If you would like to give us that motion in writing, we'll defer it to just before our break.

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WENTWORTH COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: Could I call upon the Wentworth County Board of Education to come forward, Allan Greenleaf. Welcome, Mr Greenleaf.

Mr Bruce Wallace: I'm not Mr Greenleaf. I am Bruce Wallace. I am chair of the Wentworth County Board of Education and I'm making the presentation on behalf of the Wentworth County Board of Education. You have copies of our presentation before you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Wallace. I apologize. Our agenda had Mr Greenleaf on it. We're delighted to have you here in his stead.

Mr Wallace: Every day the Globe and Mail is published, the excerpt from the writings of Junius appears just below the banner on the editorial page, as illustrated in your copy, and I will read it. "The subject who is truly loyal to the Chief Magistrate will neither advise nor submit to arbitrary measures." Although most readers probably skim right by without even reflecting on the significance of that statement, the admonition remains as pertinent today as it was when first penned by the author.

The introduction of Bill 104, along with several companion pieces of similar legislative import, has pushed Ontario's publicly funded school system into a condition of near-paralysis, because the "revolution" from which they have emerged has much less to do with commonsense reforms than with the imposition of arbitrary measures.

The Common Sense Revolution, the Progressive Conservative Party source document on which this flawed legislation is based, boldly proclaims on page 7: "We want to provide efficient government service. That means setting priorities, cutting out fat and waste, and putting people first." Yet putting people first is precisely what hasn't happened as the process leading to Bill 104 has unfolded. Instead, we are experiencing the kind of unrelenting and demoralizing destabilization which comes from putting ideology first, a long way ahead of the people this government was elected to serve.

Undoubtedly, as you've conducted these hearings, you will have heard a lot about how democracy should work. Indeed, most Ontario governments in the last years, regardless of their party affinity, have understood that they govern with the consent of the electorate. However, when that consent is taken to mean freedom to act in any manner the party in power sees fit, dismantling or radically reshaping our societal institutions to comply with party ideology may seem an easy enterprise to undertake. Under majority government, scant attention needs to be paid to what anybody else would like to see happen.

Certainly the government has the legislative authority to act unilaterally, but it loses the moral authority to impose its will when it chooses to rule by sheer political force rather than governing with the wisdom derived from full consultation with the electorate. Clearly it was our

board's hope that the Common Sense Revolution would proceed in the spirit of common sense rather than as a revolution.

With acknowledgement to Stephen Covey, it's crucial to the maintenance of our society's confidence in government for our political leaders to recognize, "There's no need to rip public education out by the roots to see if it's growing."

In our brief responding to the Interim Report of the Ontario School Board Reduction Task Force, which is appendix A, we made five very specific recommendations which would have ensured the wise practice of governance. For ease of reference, they are incorporated into the text of this presentation as follows:

That no amalgamation of school boards occur unless the ratepayers of the municipalities affected have the opportunity, through local referendum in each municipality, to determine whether or not the proposed merger should proceed as proposed.

That any school boards proposed for merger be required to establish a joint task force for reviewing and determining the organizational requirements of the new board structure and reporting its recommendations to the Minister of Education and Training accordingly.

That no amalgamation of school boards be legislated without the full and complete public review of the joint task force's report to the Minister of Education and Training of the benefits and drawbacks of such a merger from fiscal, human, political and educational perspectives.

That no amalgamation initiatives be undertaken until educational finance reforms have been introduced and fully implemented to ensure that appropriate cost comparisons are being used as the basis for any decisions made.

That, should the Minister of Education and Training determine to proceed with the amalgamation of school boards, the government of Ontario assume direct responsibility for absorbing any and all costs attributable to the mergers legislated.

When this government's term of office started out, the Common Sense Revolution was about reducing the cost of government. Part of the rationale for reducing the number of school boards was that, "Bureaucratic barriers stand in the way of more cost-efficient methods of operation."

While the possibility exists that some boards may have scorned working with their counterparts, our board has a long history of collaborative endeavour in this regard. In the few instances where we have chosen not to do so, it has been because of negative financial repercussions to Wentworth's ratepayers had we proceeded.

Indeed, so concerned have we been about the fiscal impact of the merger proposed by the Sweeney task force's report that we commissioned the Doane Raymond chartered accounting firm to conduct an independent analysis of the statistical framework used to recommend the merger of the Wentworth and Hamilton boards of education. That's enclosed as appendix B. Although copies of that analysis were sent to various government ministers and to the Premier, Bill 104 still emerged with the same recommendation to merge the two boards as had been included with the Sweeney report.

Despite the fact that we believe the Doane Raymond document clearly outlines the financial folly of proceeding with this particular school board merger, we're left with the inescapable conclusion that the issue isn't really about cost reduction at all, because if it was, the government could not possibly pursue the merger route with such ardour, a route which has repeatedly proven to be significantly more costly wherever public sector amalgamation has occurred, given the levelling-out ramifications involved.

Instead, what appears to be at the centre of the turmoil being caused by Bill 104, and the other pieces of restructuring legislation being put forward under the disentanglement deregulation banner, is nothing more or less than an ideological desire for the consolidation of political power at the provincial level. It's a winner-take-all approach to governance, which is particularly offensive to ratepayers who just want common sense to prevail, not ideological conviction. If this whole situation is really about money, why not prove it by simply reducing transfer payments accordingly while leaving the existing boards intact?

That said, the Common Sense Revolution cannot possibly be considered to reflect the will of the electorate at all if the government is unwilling to subject its plans for such massive restructuring to the kind of careful and inclusive review we recommended earlier. Why not ask, through the broader school council network, what Ontarians want to see happen? Then at least you'd know what the people already designated to be responsible for providing advice actually think about their particular school boards and local trustees before our school board structures and trustee representation patterns are altered beyond recognition. That way, the choice to proceed with mergers or to maintain existing structures can be left to the communities affected and be based on local preference rather than provincial directive on a one-size-fits-all basis.

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It may be argued by some that we've asked to appear before you today for desperate and self-serving reasons. To a limited extent, we'd have to acknowledge that no organization which prides itself on its accomplishments willingly volunteers for dismemberment, and we're no exception. However, we'd like to close by referring to two unsolicited testimonials, including the following letter apparently sent to the editors of the Toronto Star and the Hamilton Spectator respectively as a tribute to the effectiveness of our local school board trustees. It's interesting that the article appeared in the Hamilton Spectator today entitled "Public Education Provides Good Value." Although it is specifically directed to the contributions of two particular individuals, many other such letters commending our board for actions it has taken could be drawn to your attention. You have a copy there, and I will read it:

"To the Editor:

"In defence of our devoted trustees!

"We would like to clarify some points made by the Minister of Education John Snobelen, in his announcement of education restructuring. The points were made in an attempt to justify his plan to reduce the number of school board trustees throughout the province.

"The Wentworth County Board of Education trustees earn around \$11,000 per year, not \$40,000. Their office is not decorated with a waterfall or terrazzo flooring. It is a slightly renovated old school, at least a mile from the nearest golf course. When assessing Minister Snobelen's statements about trustees, clearly his exposure has been very limited and certainly not extended into Wentworth county. Our trustees attend countless evening meetings, serve on numerous committees, and spend time returning endless phone calls to the concerned parents throughout their district. They take on responsibilities that consume hours of their personal time.

"Specifically, trustees Heather Bullock and Alaina Muhlstock have well represented the parents and students in Dundas for several years. We can speak knowingly of their routine. They have taken time to become part of our lives through their dedication to maintaining the quality in our children's education. Ms Bullock and Ms Muhlstock faithfully attend our monthly parent association meetings. They provide educational information and patiently answer our questions. When their professional point of view differs from ours, they provide the situational background to allow us to respect the decisions they make at the board table."

The Chair: Mr Wallace, could I ask you to wrap up, please.

Mr Wallace: Thank you. I will not continue with the rest of the letter, and I will not refer to the other letter; it's in the appendix. I'll come to the conclusion.

What's at stake for our ratepayers in Wentworth isn't as much the concern about present cost as it is about the future cost of a blended board. We're already one of the low-cost boards in this province, and we can demonstrate very readily why a merged school board will produce a significantly more expensive school system for Hamilton-Wentworth. Rather, what the parents' letters reveal is the desire for the continuation of strong and effective representation at the local level, a quality which will be lost immediately for Wentworth's ratepayers if the proposed merger proceeds. This may not matter to the provincial government, but it does matter to Wentworth residents.

Even if it were only common-law applications under consideration, school boards of this province have been recognized and accepted as a legitimate form of governance for well over a century. It is not just the quantity of trustee representation at the local level which has been so significantly reduced with the introduction of Bill 104, but also the quality of trusteeship which will be left at the local level after its imposition.

The inability of local trustees to levy taxes and to direct their expenditures effectively reduces trustees to little more than rubber-stamp status for predetermined ministry initiatives. How, in a democratic country, can you even consider passing legislation designating an appointed body, namely the Education Improvement Commission, to supervise the decisions of the legally elected school board officials? Such an approach is not democracy at all, but despotism at its most blatant level.

Under these circumstances, it is not even clear that Bill 104 will withstand the constitutional challenges which will inevitably spring to life with its passage, constitutional challenges no less serious than might be expected

from the separate school system if the really high-cost issue was addressed; that is to say, the duplication of administrative costs caused by the parallel operation of the public and separate school systems in this province.

What we're really asking you to do in your deliberations, therefore, is to look at the facts of our existence without ideological bias and answer the concerns we have raised about Bill 104. Where we live and how we live transcends political rhetoric, and as a legislative body, the responsibility you collectively bear must also transcend party affiliations. Please don't lose Ontario, or Wentworth, for the rest of us. Why not ask before you act? Then at least you'll know what the people of Ontario think about their school boards before they are altered beyond recognition. We all have to live in the future that you create.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Chairman Wallace, for coming here and sharing your view. I regret there's never enough time, but we do appreciate the effort that you made.

PEEL BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: The Peel Board of Education, Mrs Beryl Ford. Welcome, Madam Chair. We're very happy to have you here.

Mrs Beryl Ford: Thank you very much. My name is Beryl Ford, and I chair the Peel Board of Education. With me are our director, Harold Brathwaite, and vice-chair of the board, Janet McDougald.

Good afternoon. The Peel Board of Education appreciates the opportunity to present our brief here today. We are presently the largest public school board in Canada, with 100,000 students and 177 schools. Our presentation reflects the opinions of trustees, staff and school councils.

I would start by saying we see nothing in Bill 104 that will assist school boards to be any more effective in helping students achieve. We know that \$987 million has already been removed from education. We hasten to point out that if Ontario reduced its funding by 20% to all programs, the province of Ontario would be in a surplus position today.

We are not opposed to change. If the changes in Bill 104 improved education for children, we would support them. However, we cannot see any advantage for students. Our goal is to continue to focus on student success and how we can serve them better.

In the opening of the hearings, the minister spoke of developing schools where excellence is the norm for all. There is a fallacy embedded in the mission of the Education Improvement Commission that all we need for student success is a teacher and a classroom and that we should cut or outsource everyone and everything else. In fact, every single person in a school system contributes to the bottom line of student achievement. We agree there is a need to reduce costs, but we must not lose sight of what enhances student learning. The government says boards spend 53% to 71% of budgets in the classroom. I would point out that the Peel Board of Education spends 95% of our budget in the classroom.

We're proud of the teachers in our system and the work they do with students, but those teachers are not

alone in supporting student success. They need the help of teaching assistants, psychologists, guidance counselors, librarians, school social workers and more. Students also deserve a school that is clean and safe thanks to their custodian, a school that has heat and light, a principal and a vice-principal to run the equivalent of a large business operation, and a secretary to answer parent calls in the community. Centrally, our support staff provide payroll, benefits, purchasing, computer technology and curriculum, to name a few.

A function of the EIC will be to promote and facilitate outsourcing of non-instructional services, and the new brochure on education reform speaks about taking money from non-classroom areas. Perhaps the intent is to make parents feel good about the changes. Quite the contrary. It is our experience that parents, those people in the community who know the schools best, are very concerned about the proposed changes.

There is a myth about parent dissatisfaction with schools. It is referred to many times in the brochure on education reform in very general terms such as, "Parents are concerned about their children and how their children are doing," and in the opening remarks to these hearings as "people's concerns that the education system is not delivering the quality of education that our students need."

The facts tell a very different story. For example, a 1996 Environics survey showed 70% of parents are satisfied with public education. Closer to home, 12,000 parents were asked how Peel schools rank. Some 81% agreed we are successful in assessing student progress, 77% are satisfied with our focus on curriculum and instruction, and 75% were satisfied with the high expectations for our students.

We met recently with hundreds of members of our school councils. We are very supportive of parent involvement and the role of the school councils. We asked the school council members to complete a survey about their opinions on the government restructuring, and we committed to share their comments as part of my remarks today. A summary of the comments is appended for your information.

Some 90% of those surveyed said the government is moving too quickly in restructuring education. They were evenly split on legislating school councils and slightly in favour of increasing the mandate of school councils. They also believe that the bottom line on restructuring is all about money and not about students.

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Here are a few of their comments:

"Overall, I believe our kids are being put at risk. The teachers and trustees are doing a great job."

"This will not improve education, but is merely a means of getting the funds to support election promises of tax cuts. Don't steal from our children's future and the future of this province and country."

"How can the government claim they will spend what is needed for our education system when they have already cut almost \$1 billion and the focus of all their reforms point towards savings or more budget cuts?"

This is only a small sampling of the many comments we received. The message is clear, and as a board we

agree with parents that the focus of education restructuring must be about helping students achieve. As committee members, you must ask yourselves, what is in this bill that will help children?

Now we want to look at some specifics of the bill. Amalgamation is not a direct issue for the Peel Board of Education, but as a point of interest, our school councils are opposed to the reduction of school boards.

However, we will feel the impact of the reduction in trustee numbers and honoraria. Two thirds of our school councils are opposed to the reduction in the number of Peel trustees. This reaction is consistent with the findings of the final report of the Sweeney commission. Once again, it's appended for your information. Their comments reflected their concerns about the loss of community representation, the quality of trustees after the cuts and their concern about the loss of control.

Recurring parent questions were: Are school councils to become unpaid trustees? How will Bill 104 improve the quality of education for our kids? How can the government talk about allowing for local decisions, yet severely limit the power of trustees?

Parents fear that the government has already decided school councils should have a larger role, including responsibilities normally carried out by trustees. They questioned the number of hours the government expects volunteer council members to work. They also said, "Nobody has asked us if we want our roles expanded."

As a board, we have a great concern about Bill 104. We have a concern whether we will be able to adequately represent the interests of students, parents and taxpayers. We ask, what is the rationale for reducing the number of trustees and their honoraria when the total reduction in Ontario won't buy one elementary school?

In the original opening remarks to the hearing, the rationale is in fact vague. There is a mention of recalling school boards and trustees to their traditional role as accountable and effective guardians of the quality of education. In other places it is discussed as a way to save money.

Perhaps as a board we are missing something. How can a 64% reduction in the number of trustees help to make us more accountable and effective? We could suggest other ways to save money without reducing local representation. For example, if the government would change the regulations under the Education Act to allow school boards to borrow like a business, school boards could save millions of dollars. If boards were allowed to pay teachers every two weeks instead of the present method, the Peel board could save over \$1 million a year. In fact, the Peel board did negotiate a volunteer agreement with our teachers to achieve some savings.

We also have the issue of who can run for trustee. There is suddenly a new set of rules just for trustees, rules that do not apply to other elected officials such as municipal councillors or even MPPs.

Another issue, perhaps the one that most concerns our board and our school councils, is the creation of the EIC. We don't think anyone has difficulties with the notion of a commission to assist in the transition. The real issue is that a non-elected, appointed commission will supersede democratically elected representatives of the public, and

this is totally unacceptable. Over 70% of our school councils disagreed with the creation of the commission and 93% opposed the restrictions this commission would place on school boards. School councils made the following comments:

"Why do we need bureaucrats to override our elected representatives?"

"I'm concerned about the Big Brother image of the EIC. I strongly oppose not being able to elect members of the EIC."

"How much funding will be given to the EIC?"

"I would like to know how a commission can tell a board if they agree or not regarding budget when the present board knows what we need. To me, it seems that they want to cut, but spend money wastefully on a commission."

I don't think there is much to add. The parents have spoken more forcefully than we as trustees ever could. It's simply irrational to have a government-appointed body supersede duly elected public officials and to be able to do it retroactively. It's an insult not just to trustees, but to those who voted in an open, democratic process. We ask your reaction as MPPs: If the Prime Minister of Canada decided to change the way things worked in this province and appointed a body to override the Legislature, you would probably be incensed, and so you should be.

Mr Wildman: It's the Premier's office.

Mrs Ford: We're talking about the Prime Minister of Canada right now.

Mr Wildman: The Premier's office overrides the Legislature.

Mrs Ford: I won't debate that.

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): You're talking about the social contract.

The Chair: Please let Mrs Ford finish.

Mrs Ford: Yet that is exactly what is occurring in education, and once again, it's totally unacceptable.

Beyond the lack of accountability and the lack of respect for democracy, there is one other key area of concern for our board: the promotion of outsourcing. The EIC has a mandate to promote outsourcing of non-classroom functions as a solution. There is no rationale or research, to our knowledge, to support this action.

Outsourcing may have a role to play in some areas. However, as a board we've already explored outsourcing of many services. With custodial services, for example, we've invited proposals from large organizations, but our own custodial staff made a proposal that saved far more money than outsourcing ever would. Our cost to clean a square foot of our buildings is not only lower than comparable schools boards in the province, but lower than the private sector. In fact, our costs are lower than those of the province.

In the past we have explored other ideas, such as design, build, or lease schools. Let the government show us figures that make this a better financial or management decision. We've asked, but we haven't received a reply.

Bill 104 has created a sense of fear among our staff that their jobs are in jeopardy and that they are no longer valued. Undue stress, through this bill, has been placed

on thousands of individuals, having a direct effect on families and children in this province.

Our presentation does not mean we are unwilling to change. In fact, an appropriately structured EIC could look at innovations now taking place across the province and identify ways to share those ideas. In Peel, for example, our joint busing system with the separate school board saves over \$1 million a year. It's only one of the many cooperative ventures with public sector partners. We are also part of the new Ontario Member School Boards Corp, a non-profit, arm's-length corporation of 15 or so school boards that have come together to look at new ways to save money and generate revenue.

To conclude, I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of my colleagues on the Peel Board of Education, our staff, the school councils and the taxpayers of Peel. I sincerely hope that our presentation today has refocused the attention to where it belongs, back to the needs and the interests of students. Thank you.

1240

The Chair: Chair Ford, we're very grateful to you and your colleagues for being here today. You've used up all your time, very well, may I add, and very eloquently. Thank you on behalf of the committee.

Mrs Ford: Thank you very much. If I may, with your permission, I've been asked to bring today a petition with 75 signatures from Corsair school council and 115 signed letters from school councils within the Peel board.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We appreciate it.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Madam Chair: Is that the board that has the waterfall and the terrazzo flooring that the minister keeps talking about?

The Chair: That is out of order.

Mrs Janet McDougald: I would respectfully request to respond to that.

The Chair: If you can make it very, very brief.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, if I may, I think it is appropriate because it has been used as an example by Tory members for our entire hearings.

The Chair: Mrs McLeod, I've heard you. I'm going to allow a very quick response.

Mrs McDougald: I'll allow our chair to respond.

Mrs Ford: Thank you, Mr Wildman. We do not own, operate or plan on building a golf course. Also, we —

Mr Young: Are you a partner in a golf course?

Mrs Ford: We are not a partner in the golf course. Trustee McDougald was chair of the task force. We've been asked to look at innovative ways to raise revenue. This is following the direction of this province, with business people coming in and helping generate revenue. We'd be happy to share with you all the information we have. The minister is very well aware of it. It's been shared and discussed with him.

On the waterfall: We do not have a waterfall. The building we're in won an award when it was built for efficiency in the province of Ontario, in fact in Canada. We have an air conditioning unit which is run by water. It's turned off in the winter. It's been off since the air conditioning goes off. It comes back on in the summer. It's very efficient. It's very effective. It's very much energy-saving.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Chair Ford.

Applause.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, please, time is very tight.

Also, I would please ask members not to ask bogus points of order after a witness's time has elapsed. There is plenty of time for questioning. We'll have to address it in some other fashion to allow everyone to be able to speak.

Mr Wildman: My point of order may have been bogus, but so were the minister's comments.

The Chair: Mr Wildman, it really doesn't warrant a response.

ARTHUR DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL AND PARENT COUNCIL

The Chair: I call upon Deborah Bokor, from the Arthur District High School Parent Council. Thank you very much for being here. I notice you have a co-presenter. Could I ask you to introduce your co-presenter?

Mr Ross Candlish: Thank you, Madam Chair. Deb is here to speak on behalf of the student and the school councils. The points really represent our feelings in rural Ontario.

Ms Deborah Bokor: Will Mr Skarica be joining us?

The Chair: He should be here shortly. He generally is.

Could I ask you to introduce your co-presenter for the record? I'm not sure Hansard caught it.

Ms Bokor: I'd like to introduce Ross Candlish. He's the chair of the Arthur District High School council in Arthur, Ontario.

The Chair: To answer your question, Mr Young is the other parliamentary assistant to the minister and will stand in for Mr Skarica until he returns.

Ms Bokor: I'd like to thank you for the opportunity and would request your undivided attention in addressing the issues of concern which the parents of Wellington county have described to me regarding Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act.

With the introduction of the act, it is our opinion that the Minister of Education has begun dismantling the education system in Ontario to the detriment of its students. The changes are widespread and far-reaching and particularly affect the quality of education for students in rural Ontario. We have concerns about the potential impact on funding; representation; the democratic process; equality between public and separate school systems; volunteers and the school council mandate; and local values, beliefs, and well-made existing plans for our children's future.

We fear that the proposed changes have few benefits and many weaknesses that will severely impact the system, which is claimed by many to be second to none in the world.

On the issue of funding, this government is proposing that school funding will no longer come from residential property taxes but from grants for education generated from provincial income tax revenue. In addition, we understand that commercial and industrial taxes for education will continue to be collected at the municipal level and pooled for distribution across the province to

both the public and separate school systems, based solely on a per pupil formula. We are concerned that regional and community-specific needs will not be adequately met through this equalization process.

On the issue of representation: Under the Queen's Park proposal, adequate representation in public education and access to the decision-making process by members of the community will be severely curtailed. Part-time trustees and parent councils will have little power to influence arbitrary and centralized decision-making by the provincial government. Early signs indicate that these changes, including setting up a restructuring commission and committees across the province, will not only negatively impact representation levels and access, but also will create new bureaucratic layers and cost millions of additional dollars.

On the issue of democratic process, even though it has been said that nothing can be done to reverse this legislation, we know democracy does not work in the way it is being proposed. The Education Improvement Commission will take over school board functions. This all-powerful, provincially appointed body, accountable only to the minister, will be able to dictate which programs we can run locally, the people we can hire locally, and the services we have to fund locally. This is provincial policy dictating local delivery. Where's the democracy?

The democracy of the new system is apparently not in the governance of education, it does not appear to be in the new funding mechanism, and it is not immediately evident in the proposed system of accountability. I wonder if it can be manifested in a newly formed Education Improvement Commission, whose decisions will be autocratic, final and unable to be questioned through the legal system. The people of Ontario are more than willing to do things differently if the ultimate impact is improved education for our students. A truly democratic system will help to ensure a strong public school system, which is essential in the continuation and preservation of a productive and humanitarian society.

On the issue of equality between public and separate school systems, it appears that this government is planning to strip away public school boards' rights to collect taxes while allowing Roman Catholic separate school boards to continue to tax. As a public school parent, I am offended that separate school trustees will be able to choose to pay for extra programs for their students but my board won't be able to provide anything but basic programs for our children.

The minister keeps talking about equality, but I see no equal treatment here. We have already seen boards of education, educational workers, school councils, support staff and others in the community pitted against each other for months in an attempt to meet the reduced budgets of our public education system. What will happen in future when these two systems collide and community members perceive that one is for the rich and the other for those who are not as well-off?

On the issue of impact on local volunteers, in England local school councils, which are mandated, encounter a host of difficulties imposed by the government's policy. As is being proposed in Ontario, they are given a per pupil budget and they are responsible for hiring and

paying staff, and setting and ensuring standards for the school. Marketing the school has become one of the most important functions of the council because each new student increases the grant given by the local education authority. In Ontario, will school councils work towards the same goal?

1250

In England also it is agreed that parents who will serve on school councils are scarce. In affluent neighbourhoods, councils appear to be more effective than in less well-to-do areas. School essentials like computers and books for programs can be found in the rich-family sector, where it is easier to raise funds that the education authority budget doesn't cover.

But even in the affluent areas of England, parents conclude that they don't yet feel well enough informed to take on the commitment required of a school council member. The reasons are varied, but lack of communication and access to the policymakers are two key concerns. What exactly does the Minister of Education plan to do if there are schools where no parents feel able to take on similar additional responsibilities? Legal sanctions? Withdraw funding? Provincial appointments to local councils?

The issue of local values and planning: "Ontarians have watched as other jurisdictions around the world have reformed their education systems to manage the costs of education, reducing duplication and waste, and streamlining administration and bureaucracy." This is a direct quote from Minister Snobelen on January 13, 1997. Lucy Annetts is a parent from Australia, currently living in our province. Australia is one of the countries that has revamped its school system in a manner that Mr Snobelen finds commendable. Here is what she has to say about what actually happened in her students' schools:

Classroom numbers rose.

Specialist programs such as ESL and remedial literacy and numeracy were severely cut back.

The number of classroom assistants was cut.

Hundreds of schools closed. Discouraged, some of the best teachers abandoned the state or public education system.

Schools now must self-fund extras. This means that the school community has never-ending fund-raising activities.

So-called free education has all but disappeared. Schools in more affluent areas are again able to raise funds more readily, so they have better equipment and other resources.

Teacher morale dropped and the community lost confidence in the public school system, resulting in a steady drift of students to private schools. In turn, these began to classify themselves according to tuition fees and quality of programming. Publicly funded private charter schools, which seem in this province to suit our government's privatization agenda, have not done very well.

The model for public education in Ontario must include essential programs and services necessary to all of our students. Beyond the essential components, every school must provide those services and programs which meet the particular social and emotional needs of students who come to school disadvantaged and unprepared to

learn. Our schools must be provided with additional resources to address those needs. For example, the provision of transportation for students who participate in specialized programs or who live some distance from school, as in many rural communities, is a critical component of the model. The model also affirms that knowledgeable, creative and caring teachers, combined with supportive and accountable leadership by the administrators and trustees, are vital contributors to the achievement of successful outcomes for our students.

To the contrary, the province's proposed education changes seem to pave the way for a market-driven education system consisting of vouchers, charter schools and other privatization measures. Students of different backgrounds, abilities and means would end up in different schools and universal access to education in Ontario would be lost.

The choices and options are not clear: Totally eliminating school boards? Having larger boards or smaller boards? Having schools run by the province or by the municipality or by school councils? All the changes are confusing to many of us and, I suspect, to many of you. Is there anyone here with a clear picture of where Ontario education is going? Where are the savings? Where is the proven logic? Effective change requires a sense of purpose and a plan. All students may suffer if massive changes are introduced in so many key areas at the same time.

Mr Snobelen keeps saying that once he has total control of funding he will make sure the needs of students are met. But he has been very careful to avoid saying how he'll do that and at the same time chop the billion dollars out of education that this government needs to deliver the final phase of its promised tax cut. We are somewhat reluctant as parents to take his word on meeting the needs of our students without being given many of the details, financial or otherwise.

The Chair: Could I ask you to wrap up, please.

Ms Bokor: In conclusion, to ensure that this government is making wise choices with regard to Bill 104, the implications and impact need to be reviewed. It seems that four days of hearings totalling 36 hours of deliberation is limited at best. We need to demand a clear explanation from Mr Snobelen as to his plans and their ability to improve the quality of education in the province. So far, this government's promises focus on saving education dollars while producing a better product. When it comes to education and the future of our children, it is imperative that we make wise decisions, not just choices which appear to focus only on economic benefits.

I ask this committee again, do you know exactly what Mr Snobelen is planning? Does Mr Snobelen know? All of us must work together and insist that he clearly and carefully explain how the education system is now broken and how it can be fixed through his vision. Talk is cheap. Poor planning and decision-making will not be cheap.

As my own Wellington County Board of Education's plan reflects the values that we as community members hold, my hope is that the new provincial plan will value equal access to quality education for all our children. Anything else will clearly cost this province, to the very extent of costing it our future.

On behalf of the parents and students in the province of Ontario, I charge this committee here today and the provincial government to give parents and students the assurance that Bill 104 will be reconsidered and that straightforward answers about the future of our schools will be given before the entire public education system is dismantled.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Bokor, for presenting to us, and thanks to Mr Candlish for being here as well. Time is just never enough. We are operating under strict guidelines, as you know. I do want to tell you that this is our 10th day of hearings. While it may still not be long enough, it's not the four days that you indicated.

JOE MISKOKOMON

The Chair: I call upon the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Chief Joe Miskokomon and Ms Gina McGahey. Welcome. It's a pleasure to have you here. We're looking forward to your presentation.

Chief Joe Miskokomon: First of all, I'd like to thank the committee for inviting us to participate in these very important hearings. I'd like to introduce our director of education, Ms Gina McGahey from Chippewas of the Thames First Nation. My Indian name is Nee Gon Quoum. I'm a member of the Anishinabek. My given name is Joe Miskokomon. The Department of Indian Affairs knows me as band number 917 from Indian reserve 42.

Historically, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada held the responsibility of providing educational services on behalf of the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation and Onyota'A:Ka First Nation. A new era has begun, whereby first nations have taken the initial footsteps towards first nations self-government by assuming the authority of education in their own communities. This was well supported in the consultation process with first nations which stated, from the Ministry of Education's For the Love of Learning report:

"Aboriginal communities made clear to us the great store they place in education. They believe that unless they themselves govern the education of their children, they won't have control over the preservation of their languages and cultures."

1300

Since 1993, the Chippewas of the Thames and the Onyota'A:Ka First Nation have been active participants in a senior elementary-secondary tuition agreement with the London Board of Education. Due to the recent release of Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act has created an impact on the relationship between the new school board and first nations regarding master tuition agreements and special services agreement. In this presentation, we will list the areas of concerns as well as recommendations on behalf of our first nation and others that need to be addressed.

Relationship with the Ministry of Education and Training:

- (a) definition and parallel relationship;
- (b) representation on the commission and subcommittees;

- (c) accreditation to a community-based secondary program;

- (d) recognition and resourcing of native language programs.

Relationship with the new school board:

- (a) native representation to school board;

- (b) first nation authority on native-specific programs.

Recognition and distribution of first nations' existing capital assets to the new school board.

Commitment of existing tuition agreements with the new school board.

Accountability on secondary student dropouts and graduates.

Relationship with the Ministry of Education and Training and first nations:

(a) Definition and parallel relationship: Historically, the Education Act has referred to first nations as "bands" in relation to tuition agreements with the school board and classification of first nation schools as "private schools." Due to many changes in the transfer of education responsibilities to first nations, there needs to be a definition for first nation education authorities in determining the relationship between the Ministry of Education and Training and the new school board. This definition must be developed by first nations and should not be determined by a classification from the ministry.

Recommendation 1: Recognition and definition of the first nation education authorities within the Fewer School Boards Act. A definition that includes a parallel relationship between the Ministry of Education and Training, the new school board and the first nation education authorities.

(b) Representation on the commission and subcommittees: At this time we are not aware of any native representation to the commission and subcommittees. We need to address first nation educational issues to a subcommittee. Some issues to be addressed are native representation, teachers' accreditation and the Education Quality and Accountability Office, EQAO, etc.

Recommendation 2: That the Ministry of Education and Training establish an education improvement commission and sub-committees on native issues with equitable representation from the first nations to identify common interests between the Ministry of Education and Training and first nations.

(c) Accreditation to a community-based secondary program: One of our major obstacles is the awarding of secondary credits. Previous discussion with the ministry indicated that a program requires a joint relationship with an area school board. By doing so, it gives the school board the authority over the curriculum and staffing. If the French component has the right to develop their own curriculum, should this principle not also apply to first nations? Who would best know the needs of the students but first nation people? Finally, by not allowing direct accreditation to a community-based secondary program it will continue to interfere with the first nation's self-government initiatives.

Recommendation 3: That the Ministry of Education and Training provide initiative for funding and accreditation for a first nation community-based secondary program similar to the French-speaking program.

Recognition of native language programs: Bill 104 currently provides a wide recognition for the French-language program but does not provide the same recognition for first nation languages. In southern Ontario we have experienced many barriers in securing a native language teacher. Our major barrier is the increasing extinction of the speakers in this area. Secondly, any fluent speakers are required to have accreditation and training in order to teach in provincial schools. Any fluent speakers we do have are elders which require relocation away from the community for training. Language courses offered to the students do not justify a full-time position, therefore cultural component courses should be offered as well. Currently, curriculum resources are underdeveloped and funding is very limited. Initiatives need to be taken to revitalize the native language before it is lost forever.

Recommendation 4: That the Ministry of Education and Training provide recognition and resourcing for first nations' languages as for any other language component. Furthermore, the ministry and federal government increase their participation and funding to assist in the revitalization of the native languages.

Relationship with the new school boards:

(a) Native representation to school boards: According to the Education Act, it indicates that one native trustee be appointed for every 100 students. Also that at the discretion of the board an additional trustee may be appointed pending the percentage of first nation population. Within the London area, there are two distinct first nations Iroquois and Ojibway, who have a very distinct culture and language. Currently we are required to share one trustee.

Recommendation 5: That the Ministry of Education and Training and new school boards allow for native representation from each first nation community to be part of the new school board, appointed by first nations or their designate organization.

(b) First nations' authority on school board's native-specific program: According to our existing tuition agreement, the school board has the total responsibility over curriculum and staffing of native-specific programs. This has created difficulty in allowing first nations input into evaluating programming and staff. We question the cultural relevance of the curriculum currently being presented to first nations students.

Recommendation 6: That the Ministry of Education and Training and the fewer school boards guarantee first nations communities equal and equitable representation and participation on issues relating to native-specific curriculum and staffing.

Recognition and distribution of first nations' existing capital assets to the new school boards: Over the past 25 years the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation and many other first nations in Ontario have made a significant capital investment in existing school boards. In particular, the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation have made a capital agreement with the Middlesex county school board as well as paying for student accommodation fees to both London and Middlesex boards. Our estimated calculation over that period is \$400,000. Our concern is what happens to that capital investment when the new school boards come into existence.

Recommendation 7: That the Ministry of Education and Training provide an assessment of first nation capital assets with the current school boards and provide recognition and transfer of those assets to new school boards or back to us.

Ongoing commitment on existing tuition agreements with new school boards: Our first nation has negotiated with the London board on a tuition agreement as well as special service agreements for our first nation schools. Also the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation hold a tuition agreement with the Middlesex board for secondary schools and some of the parents of that community have grandfathering agreements for their elementary school students. Will our existing agreements continue to be honoured with their expiry dates?

Recommendation 8: That the Ministry of Education and Training and the new school boards continue to recognize the existing tuition agreements held by Chippewas and Onyota'A:Ka until the expiry date of the agreements.

Recommendation 9: That the Ministry of Education and Training and the new school boards continue to recognize the Middlesex board's grandfather clause held by the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation's parents until the phase-out of their students.

Accountability on secondary school dropouts and graduates: First nations are directly involved in tuition agreements and payment of fees. There is an increase of accountability to find out if we are getting what we paid for. Currently, we are investing half a million dollars a year for the Chippewas of the Thames students and we have limited accountability on students in high-cost programs or success rates. According to our statistics, only one third of our students entering grade 9 in a given year will graduate five years later. This is a very poor accountability record which has a wide range of circumstances contributing to it. Therefore, there is a need for a database so that we can continue to address issues that pertain to our students.

Recommendation 10: That the new school board provide a statistical database for accountability to first nations on secondary students who are early school leavers and graduates.

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In summary, with Bill 104 coming into existence, we need to ensure and clarify the outcome it will have for our first nations. First nations and the provincial government must begin to meet to understand and resolve issues that affect our people, as stated in the recommendations, in assuring representation to the new school board by becoming actively involved in the implementation of Bill 104. Our goal is to provide a quality and a cultural-valued education program for our children to help them to survive in both societies.

Finally, it is the firm belief of our people that we must plan for the next seven generations. We have now begun the process of self-government for our future and we must have accountability to our future. It is with our footsteps that we begin the path for a stronger nation. Meegwetich.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate your very thoughtful and very thorough brief. I'll take you back, I think it was to

the first recommendation, and your concern about the arbitrary classification terminology of the ministry. There is only one reference in Bill 104 and it is indeed a reference to "bands." My very quick question would be: Can you recommend an amendment that would satisfy the first recommendation that you make?

Chief Miskokomon: As you well know, "bands" has been something of an archaic term that has gone by the wayside through the Department of Indian Affairs for quite some time. Unfortunately, it has only been through the Indian Act that the terminology continues to exist. We believe if there is a new act then they should start recognizing Indian self-government and place first nations in that act.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much, Joe. It's nice seeing you again. I want to pursue this. We've had questions raised about representation on the new boards. You mention in here that Oneida, which is Iroquoian, and the Chippewas of the Thames, which is Ojibway culture, only have one representative. You have to share a representative. Obviously, with new amalgamated boards there are going to be more bands, more first nations involved and there is going to be this problem again if there is only representative. You're suggesting one representative from each first nation. If you don't get proper representation, what other options are available to the first nations in terms of serving their students?

Chief Miskokomon: We believe that, first of all, it would only be wise to have representation from each first nation, primarily because the board gets very confused. In our circumstances, we have Iroquoian society on one side of the table. Every two years they change representation. We have Ojibways come in or have Chippewas come in and we have a set of preferences based on them and it becomes very confusing for the school board. I think it would be fundamentally correct to have both cultures represented on the school board.

The second issue is what happens if that does not happen. We are very actively involved in discussions with the London school board at this point in terms of retaining our own children back into our community. That means there is a significant amount of funding that is being lost to the London Board of Education. We understand that, but if we have to simply follow along behind provincial government rules and standards that do not address self-government initiatives within first nations, then in fact what you're asking us to do is to become separate from, and those are the steps that we believe would be necessary to disentangle ourselves from the province of Ontario.

Mr Smith: Just as a brief comment to both Gina and Joe, it's certainly a pleasure to see you both here today. I think the presentation is very reflective of some obvious practical observations that need to be assessed as part of this process, and I guess to you, Joe, certainly reflective, I know, of the strong commitment you bring to educational opportunities for first nations people in the London-Middlesex area. Thank you very much for your comments. As Mr Wildman has suggested, they're not inconsistent with some of the comments and concerns that we've heard from other first nations people over the course of the committee hearings, so thank you very much.

The Chair: Chief, we do appreciate the fact that you came here and shared your views with us, and thank you too to Ms McGahey for being here.

PERTH COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: The Perth County Board of Education, Wendy Anderson. Welcome, Madam Chair. We're pleased to have you here.

Mrs Wendy Anderson: Thank you. We're pleased to be here as well.

The Chair: I notice you have a co-presenter. I gather that's from the Huron County Board of Education.

Mrs Anderson: No, this is our director from the Perth County Board of Education, Mr Paul Sherrat.

Before I begin, I thought I'd just give you a little geography lesson of where Perth county is. We are located north of Oxford, a speaker from which you have heard this morning. Stratford is the largest urban area in our county and while it contributes greatly to our economy, a great proportion of our income, and in fact more of our income in Perth county, derives from agriculture than from tourism.

Our board is a forward-thinking board, I would like to say. At the last election, more than half of the new board that was elected were parents with children in the system, and I think we think similarly to the government in that way, that we like to have parents involved in making decisions.

I am pleased to present on behalf of the Perth County Board of Education and thank you for the opportunity to address your hearings into Bill 104. We invited our proposed amalgamation partners in Huron county to lend their support to our submission, which they have done by co-signing it, if you notice, at the back.

Since the first draft of the Fewer School Boards Act was read in the Legislature on January 13 of this year, many questions and concerns have been raised at our board. You will see them outlined in our written submission. It is not my intention to read that submission to you but to expand on some of the items contained within it. In doing so, I will speak specifically about Perth county circumstances but can assure you that the Huron County Board of Education shares our concerns.

You have already been addressed by the president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association on the first day of your hearings. On this the last day of the process, please understand that we fully support the objections raised in that submission, namely, the loss of constitutional rights to raise taxes locally and the lack of accountability to local ratepayers in the creation of an all-powerful Education Improvement Commission.

Many others who have appeared before you today and in days previous have discussed the philosophical difficulties that they have with the proposed legislation. Today I will bring forward some practical considerations as befitting a presentation from a predominantly rural constituency.

It is clear from our preliminary discussions with our neighbours in Huron county that amalgamation will be of no obvious benefit to taxpayers, students or staff presently served by the Perth County Board of Education. We

have been a model of efficiency for the province in our methods of education delivery.

Our budgets have decreased each and every year since 1992, with our 1996 budget being \$900,000 less than 1992. In 1994, we had the second-lowest cost per pupil of all the public school boards in Ontario. In the figures supplied to the Ministry of Education and Training for the Report on School Board Spending that was prepared by the Ernst and Young folks, our board spending pattern was very favourable compared to the provincial median. We spend \$50 more per student on direct classroom expenditures, \$213 less on classroom support and \$217 less on supervision and administration.

In fact, even though we spend more than the provincial median on direct classroom expenditures, our total spending including capital costs, transportation and continuing education was \$496 less per full-time-equivalent student than the median spending level in the province. To reach the spending levels of the provincial median, our budget would have to be increased by \$5.5 million. We suggested to the Minister of Education in our meeting with him that we could give lessons to other boards on the economical delivery of education, and he did not disagree.

How have these economies been achieved? As our provincial funding has been decreased, we have restructured and restructured again so that at present our staff levels fall well below those recommended in the Sweeney report. We have sought out partnerships with our coterminous boards and other community groups to ensure delivery of services at the most economical price. We contract out many of our custodial duties and all of our transportation services. We belong to a consortium that purchases natural gas. In partnership with our municipal counterparts, we have sought out shared arrangements for telephone and banking services. Our staff members are all well aware of the significant funding difficulties we face and have worked hard to keep our actual spending well below the budgeted figures, year after year.

1320

While none of these specific issues is addressed directly in Bill 104, my point in raising them is to show you that savings have been and can be achieved by seeking out alliances that are natural and logical for the community in which we live. The enforced and enlarged educational jurisdictions created by Bill 104 will not contribute to cost savings within Perth and Huron counties. The short-term costs of amalgamation created by the necessity of aligning collective agreements, the possibility of buying out contracts for those employees declared redundant at the administrative level, the pay equity provisions and the installation of technology to connect the two systems are a hurdle that will take significant funds away from our classrooms.

We have been told repeatedly that the costs of amalgamation are to be borne by the school boards involved. On this point we must make our most strong objection. The new district school board boundaries defy logic. Clearly, little or no consideration has been given to the studies that discuss optimum size and optimum efficiency. There is no consistency that I can see in geographical size, number of students, or electoral populations. Some boards, such as the one in the minister's own riding, have

been left untouched, even though their spending habits were decry by the minister on January 13.

If some boards are not involved in a transition and therefore have no related costs, should the rest of us who will face these costs assume that this is a punitive measure on the part of the Conservative government? If so, what are we being punished for? We cannot bear these costs. If we are truly responsible to the ratepayers who elected us in Perth county, we should simply refuse to continue with the process that will take money out of the classroom in our home county. There has been a fund set up to assist municipalities with their transition costs. This provision must be extended to school boards as well.

Similarly, we must address the issue of access to reserve funds in the preparation of our 1997 budgets. It is a notion shared by many in Perth county, both inside and outside the educational community and supported by our MLA, that the moneys in our reserve funds must be used to benefit the Perth county ratepayers who contributed to them in the first place. From the outset, the current board has identified the task of implementing technology for the use of our students as a priority. Each year we have used funds from our reserves to get the job done and still keep the mill rate increases to a minimum. Perth county ratepayers have been very willing to accept minimal increases so long as the money is spent on computer equipment for our schools. We can complete the plan in 1997 so that Perth county schools will all be equitably equipped. Ratepayers and students alike are expecting the schools at the end of the list to receive their fair share after all these years of waiting. We must be allowed to use our reserve funds for this purpose.

The task of amalgamation is a gargantuan undertaking that will require the efforts of many staff members who are already going well above and beyond the call of duty in fulfilling the many routine daily assignments required of them. I have heard of boards where one day a week is already being devoted to meetings to discuss amalgamation matters. If it becomes necessary for our staff to spend 20% of their time on this task, losses within the system cannot be avoided. Students and staff will not receive the support they need in a timely manner. Parents and ratepayers may not have the answers to questions they may have about things like our budget process or the amalgamation process, to name just two examples. Reports required by the Ministry of Education and Training and by the Education Improvement Commission may not be completed within the required time lines.

While the geographical realities that we face are small in light of the impossible boundaries set in northern Ontario, there are still considerable difficulties arising from them. First, it will be difficult for our students, parents and ratepayers to have access to board meetings because of the considerable distances involved in travelling from one end of the district to the other. On many occasions it has been our practice at our board to entertain delegations when an issue of concern has been brought to our attention. Similarly, we have sought out public opinion at community meetings on subjects as diverse as budget, school council implementation, and graduation expectations. It is difficult now to give equal access to each area of our one county. Doubling the land

area will result in increased costs for staff attending these meetings as resource people. It will also mean that ratepayers will be less likely to take part in the process.

Second, if the number of trustees we have assigned to our district is as small as we expect from the as yet undisclosed formula, there will be communities that are not represented. Members of the public have always had the option of attending our meetings or contacting their local trustees to bring their viewpoint forward, and this option will be lost to them.

You will see in our written submission that we have suggested that our new district school board be made up of 11 trustees, based on representation by population. In making this suggestion we have looked carefully at the proposed amalgamation within the municipalities of Perth county and would try to align the trustee distribution with these new areas. There are presently 31 trustees serving in the combined Perth and Huron boards of education. Having 11 trustees would meet the required two-thirds reduction in trustee numbers that Mr Snobelen targeted in introducing Bill 104. It would still give us significantly less representation than our coterminous separate school board. Our coterminous board will be serving just over 5,000 students and will likely have five trustees, making one trustee for 1,000 students. The new district public school board will contain over 20,000 students, making for one trustee for 2,000 students.

Since January 13 we have been waiting for the guidelines to assist us with the task. It is now almost three months later and still nothing is forthcoming. The long-promised and, I assure you, eagerly awaited new funding model is still cloaked in secrecy. The proposed amendments to Bill 100 and the response to the Paroian report have not been made public. Along with a reasonable time line, these three items are all necessary to a successful implementation plan. Is it possible that this whole process has been planned to fail so that the province can justify the elimination of school boards altogether?

The Perth County Board of Education urges this committee to seriously consider the practical implications of this legislation for our board and boards of similar size across this province. A speaker I heard recently, at a session we had for our teachers in dealing with change, said that change is mandatory but improvement is optional. You have the power to make improvements to Bill 104. Please use your option.

The Vice-Chair (Mr Dwight Duncan): Thank you, Mrs Anderson. Unfortunately, there's no time left for questions. Thank you very much.

FRENCH IMMERSION
PARENTS' ASSOCIATION OF GUELPH
CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH,
WELLINGTON COUNTY

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is Arthur District High School Parent Council.

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): We've heard them already.

Ms Bokor: There has been a slight change to the agenda. I'd like to introduce Mary Mitchell, a parent

from Wellington county, speaking on behalf of French immersion of Guelph; she is also the president of Canadian Parents for French in Wellington county.

The Vice-Chair: May I just ask where the Arthur District High School Parent Council is?

Ms Bokor: I spoke on its behalf at 12:15. It was confirmed by Ms Grannum's office.

The Vice-Chair: You were here on behalf of the home and school association and the Arthur District High School?

Ms Bokor: Yes.

The Vice-Chair: I will recognize this delegation to speak, then. You have 15 minutes.

Mrs Mary Mitchell: Thank you. My name is Mary Mitchell and I am a parent from Wellington county. I'm with the French Immersion Parents' Association and Canadian Parents for French in Wellington county.

Mr Young: Is this the Arthur District High School group or not?

Mr Wildman: They apparently were part of 12:15.

The Vice-Chair: The previous delegation indicated they were part. No one else responded to the call of that delegation. I'll recognize this delegation. It's been indicated that it was approved by the clerk's office, although she has indicated to me she's not aware of it. This is highly unusual. I will, however, recognize the delegation and give you the 15 minutes.

Mrs Mitchell: Thank you. By way of introduction, I'm a parent of three students in grades 4, 7 and 10. I have been involved in my children's education from the beginning. I have been in the classroom as a volunteer, as a lunch supervisor, as a Pizza Day helper, as a volunteer art teacher, and as a field trip volunteer. I have been a member on PTOs, parent activity councils and school council. I have attended Wellington county board public meetings on a monthly basis for several years and have served on various board committees, including the board's five-year strategic plan review team.

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I am active in the French Immersion Parents' Association of Guelph and Canadian Parents for French in Wellington county, and I meet parents throughout the area and at provincial seminars. I attend information nights for parents who send their children to kindergarten in the fall, where I help to answer questions and concerns. People phone me with comments on education. In short, I feel I am an involved parent who listens to and talks to students, teachers, administrators and parents. I am also a taxpayer.

What is my reaction to Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act? Frankly, I am overwhelmed. This is, along with other proposed changes like secondary school reform, a massive upheaval to education as we know it. Change can be difficult but bearable if there is some hope for something better. I have no hope here.

Amalgamation of school boards is a top-down decision; this is not a response to grass-roots concerns. Amalgamation is largely a two-for-one sale in educational resources, collapsing two or more previously independent boards, each with their own vision, into one unit despite resulting confusion. How will this amalgamation be achieved? What will the effects be? No one knows, as the

rules for that game have not been written yet. The Education Improvement Commission will do that. Like divine rulers, they will impose conditions and restrictions. Their decisions are final and cannot be reviewed or questioned. They are not bound by all existing laws. Boards, trustees and staff must cooperate with them, whereas the commission members themselves are protected from liability.

Where in all of this does it show that money will be saved because of fewer school boards? When our board did an analysis of the proposed amalgamation they could find no savings but more costs, largely associated with staffing changes. This leads me to suspect that Bill 104 really means major changes to existing labour laws in order to achieve financial goals. This is the only way that amalgamation will achieve these goals. The responsibilities of the Education Improvement Commission include investigating how to promote and facilitate outsourcing of non-instructional services, which implies that the present non-teaching staff will be gone.

Another point is the feasibility of strengthening the role of school councils. This implies that the great resource of parents, who are inexpensive, will be relied on further, possibly to take over work from those who are outsourced. Parents want to be involved, but to place too much reliance on parent volunteers will further distinguish the have schools from the have-not schools. Some schools will have an enthusiastic parent base; others will not have this. The resources of the schools will show that difference.

The current government feels that Ontario's workers in education are too expensive and must be displaced and replaced by cheaper labour, regardless of the effects on students and their education. Is this an improvement in education? No, but it is better for Ontario's balance sheet. I understand that the province needs to trim its spending. I question the overall plan and the speed of the decision-making.

The government wishes to be seen as more business-like. A business wishing to reduce its spending would draw up a business plan, with proposed changes evaluated for their effect on the final result. The plan would be considered and proposed changes analysed to ensure that the desired result is still realized, not destroyed in the new process. The education plan of the Conservative government is to meet financial goals by drastically chopping spending. The priority-setting will be done by lobby groups fighting over what is left of the budget pie. Those who are heard by politicians will have their interests considered.

In October, I attended a regional Ministry of Education meeting. Other parents, mostly as new members of the new school councils, were there also. We were invited less than a week before the meeting. Some found out only the day before. The meeting was during the day, so many parents could not attend; others took time off work.

We were asked to state which provincial education grants we felt were important to our respective schools and why. Most parents know little about grants or how they work. This is not our area of involvement in the schools. Parents became very frustrated and expressed some of this to the facilitators, much to their dismay. But

what did they expect? We wanted to voice concerns about issues, but, "No," we were told, "this is about money and grants." Any further comments had to be received in writing within a few days. I came away feeling that a report recommending changes had already been prepared and now somebody would merely add that the public had been consulted but could not come to any effective decision.

I felt used at that meeting. Also, what would become of any grants that were not spoken up for? Would they be cancelled for lack of a lobby group? Given this level of consultation with the ministry, people worry about what will be left in education after the changes. What effect will amalgamating with a board that does not offer French immersion have on our programs? Will we carry on as before, or expand, or close down?

Of all the proposed amalgamations in Ontario, only one joins boards with a similar approach to French immersion. All the other boards joined have different approaches. French immersion has been an effective program for more than 20 years. We have more than 2,000 students enrolled in French immersion in Wellington county and there are approximately 155,000 French immersion students in Ontario across 91 boards. These students and their families are anxious that French immersion programs continue.

How will they be affected by amalgamation? How will any provision of services outside of the usual be offered? Not all boards offer special education or behavioural programs in the same way. How will amalgamation change these programs? When students ask, "What will it be like next year?" what do we answer? If the provision and funding of such programs is handled at Queen's Park rather than at the local level, what stability is assured? Any component of the educational system will be in political hands in Toronto, not accessible to distant concerns throughout the province.

Good business practice says that you should plan for the future. How can any board realize a three- or five-year plan when the funding of such a plan will be out of their control? Local trustees may receive public input and delegations may present at local boards of education, but how often will these officials shake their heads and say: "We hear your concerns, but we have no control over our budget. That's a Queen's Park decision"?

What do the students see in the current changes? That current education is too expensive, that somehow huge sums of money can be cut from education but the quality of education will be raised. Here it is March, and we do not know what the grants are for next year. We therefore do not have a budget for education. As we have no budget, we do not know what services and programs can be offered in September, yet students are choosing courses and others are registering for kindergarten. Assumptions have to be, at this point, that next year will be the same as this year, yet last year there were changes, again with programs being curtailed or removed and a flurry of activity to fulfil the Common Curriculum.

Does a student feel valued in this process, wonder what other changes are coming? Why the secrecy about these changes? Why the rush? If we need change, let's have a plan. How and when will these changes be eval-

uated and will the public see any of this evaluation? Thank you.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much. I'll come back with a question afterwards on the issue of frustration over consultation because I think it's a very legitimate one. But I'd like to specifically take advantage of the fact that you have a background in French immersion programs. I'm going to have to do two questions in one or I won't get them both in.

I make an assumption that French immersion students in your county are currently being bused and that's the way they access French immersion programs. If that is the case, I wonder what you think the effect on French immersion programs will be if the responsibility for school busing is transferred to the municipalities.

Mrs Mitchell: If busing is not allowed to all immersion students, certainly in our county you will have fewer students choosing it and it might become the élitist program it is sometimes claimed to be.

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Mr Wildman: Earlier today a couple of the presenters basically were saying: "Where is the money? Show me the money," as Cuba Gooding Jr said in the movie. Even without major cuts beginning again in 1998, are you concerned that your French immersion programs may be threatened just by the amalgamations? If that's the case, then if there are further cuts, isn't it almost certain that they may be changed substantially and perhaps eliminated?

Mrs Mitchell: Wellington county is being amalgamated in the proposal with Dufferin county, which has no French immersion. So my question is, along with other programs, what's going to happen here? Who makes these decisions, and how? So yes, if there are further cuts or if transportation is cut or something, that will effectively kill the program.

Mr Skarica: I just want to ask you a question about parent councils. We've heard in the committee hearings over the last 10 days or so that some of the parents on school councils don't wish any more authority because they can't handle any more authority. Do you have a parent council in Wellington county, and what would your position be?

Mrs Mitchell: I am a member on the school council in one of my children's schools. I think at the moment this is the first year we've had a school council and we're all kind of floundering with where we are and what our purpose is. That does not seem clear. It doesn't help that we keep reading, "Oh, next year you'll be doing this, this, this and this as added duties." I can't speak for all parents, but I think it would be much easier if we knew before we had accepted the position what our actual expectations would be.

The Chair: Mrs Mitchell, thank you very much for coming before us and expressing the concerns of the French immersion parents.

INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS' GROUP

The Chair: The Independent Contractors' Group: Harry Pelissero, Phil Besseling and John Bridges, please. Mrs McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much. The last presenter's concern about the consultation process with parents brings me to one of the questions I have on the written responses from the ministry. It is on page 2. It has to do with the ministry's explanation of how the proposals for the board amalgamations were developed, and it indicates, "We consulted through MPPs."

I am aware that following the aborting of the consultation process on the Sweeney task force report, MPPs were asked to carry out some form of consultation for government. But apart from that farcical request, I'm not aware of any consultation through MPPs, certainly not on the proposals for school board amalgamation that have been presented when Bill 104 was presented. I would like to know what consultation on these school board boundaries, or indeed on any part of Bill 104, took place with what MPPs.

The Chair: Mr Skarica, do you have an answer or do you wish to report at a later date?

Mr Skarica: We have a caucus committee of Conservative MPPs and we had input into the proposed legislation.

Mrs McLeod: So there was a consultation selectively carried out with Conservative MPPs.

Mr Skarica: We have a committee of Conservative MPPs that deals with education issues.

Mrs McLeod: But the answer to the question of "We consulted through MPPs" is that it was a selective consultation exclusively with Conservative MPPs?

Mr Skarica: I know what you want me to say, but it was a —

Mrs McLeod: Well, you're saying it. I'm just confirming it and reiterating it because I'm appalled by it.

The Chair: I think the question has been answered. Mr Wildman.

Mr Skarica: I'm told, by the way, that it was all MPPs who were asked, but that's —

Mr Wildman: All MPPs were asked. That's true.

Mrs McLeod: On Sweeney.

Mr Wildman: On Sweeney.

Mr Skarica: Following Sweeney.

Mrs McLeod: On Sweeney. Not on Bill 104.

The Chair: Mr Wildman.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Madam Chair, I'd like to make the note that only four Liberals responded, and only four NDPs —

The Chair: Mr Wildman has the floor at the moment, Mr Froese.

Mr Wildman: I have a question that I actually meant to raise earlier resulting from the Perth county presentation. Can the parliamentary assistant confirm whether or not board reserve funds, which will be assets that have to be distributed when the boards amalgamate — whether the province will consider reserve funds to be provincial assets or whether they will be local board assets?

Mr Skarica: Under section 68 of the current Education Act, as you know, Mr Wildman, assets and liabilities of the boards merge when they merge, so they would still be the property of the boards. I imagine that's one of the aspects that the Education Improvement Commission will look at. But under the current legislation, which is unaffected by the bill as I see it, it would still belong to the boards.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Welcome, gentlemen. Thank you for your patience. Mr Pelissero, it's good to see you again.

Mr Harry Pelissero: I'll assume that won't be deducted from our 15 minutes. They're deducted from the members' break, which is rapidly becoming very short rapidly.

Mr Pelissero: Thank you, Madam Chair. My name is Harry Pelissero. I'm executive vice-president of the Independent Contractors' Group. With me today on my right is Phil Besseling. He's president and owner of Besseling Mechanical, which is a unionized mechanical contracting company. On my left is Mr John Bridges. He's president of Summit Restoration, an open shop masonry company.

I'm going to turn over the presentation to Phil Besseling. He's also president of the Independent Contractors' Group, and I can assure you we've left lots of time for questions and answers.

Mr Phil Besseling: Madam Chair, committee members, first of all I would like to thank you for allowing us to make representation to the committee.

I'm here today on behalf of the Independent Contractors' Group. The ICG is an organization of open shop and unionized construction employers who work to ensure the tendering process in public sector contracts is open to all to bid and to perform work.

We have been following with interest the issue of amalgamation of public sector agencies such as municipalities and school boards. The concern of the Independent Contractors' Group relating to Bill 104 is what would happen to those school boards that have an open bidding process for taxpayer-funded projects which merge with a school board that does not have an open bidding process.

The following is taken from our brief, Freedom of Choice, which is attached for your information.

The board of education for the city of Windsor, General Conditions, June 1990, reads:

"All electrical installation work so specified and described with the specifications and on the working drawings for this project will be performed only by electrical contractors who are current members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers."

Toronto Board of Education call for tenders, February 12 and November 21, 1991, reads:

"Contractors, in order to qualify for the above work, must be in contractual relations with the Toronto-Central...Building and Construction Trades Council and/or its affiliated unions."

When our members and their employees pay taxes, they are not identified as to union or open shop. It should not matter when bidding on taxpayer-funded projects. We do not want to see the expansion of restrictive clauses as a result of amalgamation. Our goal is to ensure there is an open bidding process.

Think of the messages these restrictive clauses send to those employees who freely choose not to belong to a union, and to other taxpayers. The messages are:

"We have set up an arbitrary barrier which gives a monopoly to international unions."

"We are prepared to take your tax dollars, but we are not prepared to allow you to work on publicly funded projects."

Imagine the unions crying "foul" or "unfair" if those same public sector agencies had a clause which allowed only open shop contractors to bid and work. They would want, and rightly so, to demand fairness. What we are asking for is fairness in the public sector tendering process.

In closing, we would ask the committee to bring forward the necessary amendments to Bill 104 to ensure there is an open bidding process for taxpayer-funded projects in all the school boards.

Thank you for allowing us to share our concerns with you. We're prepared to answer questions.

The Chair: Thanks very much. We have ample time for questions, as you said. We have three and a half minutes per caucus.

Mr Wildman: Are you aware that one of the provisions of Bill 104 is that the so-called Education Improvement Commission is to encourage and promote outsourcing by school boards?

Mr Pelissero: I wasn't aware that this was one of their mandates. Our sole purpose for coming before the committee today is to identify a concern of our membership with respect to a tendering process.

Members, whether it's the union that Phil's employees belong to or the open shop employees John's workers choose to be represented by, feel like second-class citizens with respect to being able to bid on not just school board tendering projects but also any other public sector agencies that have restrictive clauses.

I'm not sure what the mandate of the implementation commission will be. We're just here to talk about making sure the tendering process is open for all, regardless of employee affiliation. We think it would be just as unfair if the school boards we use as an example here or any other public sector agency said the only way you could bid was to be non-union; that would be unfair as well.

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Mr Wildman: Just for the record, could you tell us what union represents your employees?

Mr Besseling: My employees are represented by the Christian Labour Association of Canada, Local 6, headquartered in the Niagara Peninsula.

Mr Bill Grimmatt (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I've been listening to your presentation, gentlemen, and I've had a chance to review your brief. The focus of this committee is on Bill 104, and I wanted to ask you about that. You may be aware that the general approach and thrust of the bill is to find savings and to find efficiencies in the governance and administration of education by reducing the number of school boards and reducing the number of trustees. Do you have any comments on the wisdom of that approach?

Mr Pelissero: Not in particular. That's one of the reasons we're here, because Bill 104 is silent as to what happens, as we identify, when school boards that have an open tendering process are amalgamated with school boards that don't. That's something the committee, I hope, would take into consideration not only in terms of the proposed amendments to the legislation, but we know,

and it's been expressed by other individuals, that there could be possible legal challenges.

Basically it's successor rights that we're talking about in public sector agencies. When you amalgamate two public sector agencies, which agreement, if there's an agreement in place between two public sector agencies, is going to take precedence, in this case, where you have school boards that don't have a restrictive clause merge with school boards that do?

Our point here today is to raise and flag that as an issue, hopefully, that the committee will deal with.

Mr Pettit: Thank you, gentlemen. If the tendering were to go to the totally open bidding route, what are the chances that there may be some savings to the school boards? Are we going to see lower bids? Second, why would a union company hook up with the independents — I'm a little confused on that — from your point of view?

Mr Besseling: First of all the question is not of saving money. Our sole concern here is fairness.

Mr Pettit: Is there a chance that because it went totally open, there may be savings —

Mr Besseling: In some instances perhaps; in some instances perhaps not. One doesn't know. It's a bidding process, so you can't make that determination. The important thing here that I want to raise is that I currently work for all the school boards within my area. If in the amalgamation process, for instance, say the Halton Board of Education gets amalgamated with the Metro Toronto School Board. Will I be precluded from working there? I've worked for the Halton school board for over 25 years and all of a sudden, because they have this restrictive clause, I'm not allowed to work for them, work on a relationship with Halton board employees whom we have a good relationship with. I think that's totally unfair.

That is what we're trying to address and that is what we're trying to make this committee aware of, that in this shuffling we don't want to be lost in the process, and that's what we're afraid will happen. The concern is on the boards amalgamating, but what about those of us who work with boards? How will we be treated? All of a sudden we're cut off, and that's my concern.

Mr Pelissero: To answer Mr Pettit's question directly, why would a unionized firm or set of employees belong to the Independent Contractors' Group? Our membership covers the whole spectrum. We have companies that are AFL-CIO-organized, we have the Christian Labour Association of Canada and we have open shop. More particularly, if you as a group of employees decide that the Christian Labour Association of Canada will best represent your interests and you still have a restrictive clause that said unless you are a member of an international union, you can't bid and perform work, you still feel like a second-class citizen. They just happen to "belong" to the wrong union.

I thought that in Communism, when you belonged to the right party, you got the work. I thought that went down when the Berlin Wall came down. We still see that. To a degree, we have a Berlin Wall with respect to tendering processes within Ontario.

Mr Duncan: Harry, we've met before and you've explained this situation, so I apologize if I've missed part

of your point here. When a contractor or a subcontractor goes to bid on a job, are there not situations where independents hire through a union hall and therefore these independents can still bid on a job with union help?

Mr Pelissero: No.

Mr Besseling: If my employees choose to belong to — and that is their right, to do so — whichever union they would like and my employees choose to join CLAC, then why can't I bid on these jobs that are international? They have the right to choose.

Mr Duncan: I understand that. Especially in some of the skilled trades, I was under the impression that you could hire through a union hall an independent contractor.

Mr Pelissero: No.

Mr Besseling: Because my employees are represented by CLAC and they choose to do so, I am not allowed to hire anyone from another union group. I have a contractual relationship with CLAC, as the international has with its contractors, so we're both in the same boat. We are restricted by law.

Mr Pelissero: We've come up with a couple of ways to try and solve the problem. One is that the previous Minister of Labour, Mr Mackenzie, really detailed his or someone's interpretation within the Ministry of Labour that at the beginning of a job, if the public sector agency deemed it was going to be the owner versus the employer, and this comes under the construction section of the Labour Relations Act, there are different duties and responsibilities with respect to what an employer's rights and responsibilities are versus an owner's. His interpretation was that if the public sector agency deems itself to be an owner, then it's free to accept bids. That hasn't been challenged yet before the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

Another piece of legislation under the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations is the Discriminatory Business Practices Act, and one of the components in being able not to discriminate is based on geography. We successfully argued before the Durham Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board, where they wanted to put in basically a local preference clause, that we felt that was going to be contrary to that particular act. The Ministry of Education agreed. We think that if you wanted to amend that particular act to include employee affiliation being a practice you can't discriminate against, it might be one way to get around the problem.

The Chair: Thank you, President Besseling, Mr Pelissero and Mr Bridges. We appreciate very much your bringing your unique points to our committee.

Mr Skarica: On a point of further clarification on your question, Mrs McLeod, your submissions were after Sweeney and before Bill 104. That's the same time frame that we gave our —

Mrs McLeod: So you didn't have access to the information about the new proposals on board boundaries.

Mr Skarica: That's correct. There were four of your members who responded, four NDPs and there was our caucus committee of about 10 or 12 members.

Mrs McLeod: A very important distinction, because in one case we were consulting on something where at least

we knew what was happening and in the other case there was no consultation.

Mr Skarica: You were in the same board we were in.

OXFORD COUNTY COUNCIL OF HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

The Chair: The Oxford County Council of Home and School Associations, Lesley Schuurs. Welcome, Mrs Schuurs. We're very happy to have you here. I wonder if for the record you might introduce your co-presenter.

Mrs Lesley Schuurs: My name is Lesley Schuurs and I'm president of the Oxford County Council of Home and School Associations. I have with me today Mr Brian Peat, who is our executive vice-president.

As members of the Oxford County Council of Home and School Associations, we will address the concerns as parents on behalf of the children in our schools in Oxford county regarding Bill 104. It is very difficult to respond to Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, 1997, as all the information is not available. We have no idea what the funding model will look like, nor do we know how the implementation of this bill will come into being.

Our criterion for responding is the Home and School mission statement, "The Best for Each Student." After studying Bill 104, listening to our political leaders and trying to envision an education system in Ontario that would evolve from this bill, we still have more questions than answers.

We cannot question the suggestion of equality in education across the province since Home and School have been advocates of equal educational opportunities throughout Ontario and Canada since 1964, but we have comments and recommendations pertaining to the bill.

In Oxford county, our board of education has been fiscally responsible, accountable and approachable to the students, parents, staff and taxpayers. We question that as parents in Oxford, would our concerns be as readily dealt with by a mega-board? The answer to this, ladies and gentlemen, is a resounding: "Thank you for expressing your concern. We'll look into this matter and get back to you." That answer is not good enough when the questions and concerns will pertain to our children.

It is the recommendation of the Oxford County Council of Home and School Associations that the Oxford County Board of Education be allowed to continue operating as an individual board of education.

1400

In looking at the distribution of the school districts, we find that the public and separate school districts will have the same number: 33. With the separate school districts representing approximately 0.5 million students and the public school districts representing approximately 1.5 million students, we ask, where is the equality?

Oxford County Council of Home and School Associations recommends a fairer distribution of numbers of school districts, taking into account that the majority of students in Ontario are in the public system and 70% of the taxpayers are public school supporters.

We would also like to know why the boards of Oxford, London, Middlesex and Elgin were amalgamated, generating a student population base of approximately 90,000

students, making this school district the third-largest in Ontario when other school districts in southwestern Ontario have a student population base of approximately 50,000. Our other question related to this is why three very distinct rural boards were placed with one very urban board. We believe that the uniqueness of the four boards in this school district will pose many obstacles in becoming one school district, one unified voice for the students of these boards.

It is the recommendation of our council that the school districts reflect the individual diversity of each school board, keeping student population levels reasonable.

We also recommend that there be one publicly funded education system in Ontario. As Home and School, we realize that the bill does not address this issue and we understand the hesitation on the part of the government to implement such a system. But we believe the concerns of religion, culture and language could be addressed with major savings to the ministry and ultimately the taxpayers.

The Oxford County Council of Home and School Associations would also recommend that each board, when and if amalgamated, have equal representation by trustees. Without equal representation by trustees elected by the taxpayers of our county, how will the students, parents, staff and schools of Oxford county fare in the mega-board?

As parents and taxpayers of this province, we have grave concerns about the proposed Education Improvement Commission. We feel very strongly that no appointed body should be able to make decisions that affect Ontario's most precious resource — our children — without having to answer to us, the parents and taxpayers of Oxford county and the province of Ontario.

It is our recommendation that the Education Improvement Commission not be implemented with the non-accountable authority that Bill 104 gives it.

Realizing that Bill 104 does not elaborate on the role of school councils and no legislation has been passed to date, we believe that Home and School, having been partners in the Ontario education system for the past 81 years, has the experience to best serve the needs of the education community and the students. We are very aware that mandating volunteers to pay a membership fee is not the norm, but precedence has been set by the Ministry of Agriculture in Ontario. All farmers in Ontario must register by paying a set fee to the two farm federations recognized by the government. By implementing a similar system in education, using the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, the Federation of Catholic Parent-Teacher Associations of Ontario and Fédération des associations de parents francophones de l'Ontario, we would not be reinventing the wheel and spending unnecessary tax dollars.

The Oxford County Council of Home and School Associations recommends that there be a home and school association in every public school in Ontario.

With all due respect to this committee, with all the wide, sweeping changes that this bill would enact, it is the recommendation of the Oxford County Council of Home and School Associations that at this time we

cannot support the implementation of Bill 104 and would recommend that Bill 104 be delayed until such time that proper public debate has taken place and all questions regarding funding and implementation are answered.

We believe that with our suggested recommendations implemented, the students in Oxford county, as well as Ontario, would benefit.

Mr Froese: Thank you for coming. We've heard across the province and I've heard in my riding complaints and concerns from the parents, the teachers and the principals that they have no control over their own environment. As a matter of fact, we heard a number of days ago a principal describing that it took up to two weeks to get approval to put up a chalkboard when he had it all there; it just took so long because of the bureaucracy, primarily boards. I'm really trying to understand. We've heard your concerns and we've heard other concerns that reducing the boards and reducing the number of trustees is such a terrible thing, but parents, teachers and principals say, "We want control of what we're doing in our own school."

Could you tell me what your position on that is? Why would it be difficult? In the bill, it mentions looking at the feasibility of enhancing or giving more authority to school councils. Clearly, from what we've heard, school councils aren't ready to do this; I understand that. But if we had the teachers, the parents and the school councils working together to do what they need to do in their own school rather than having this body over here, the board, or even our own ministry or the minister determining what should be happening in that school, if you have the parameters set, what would be so bad about that?

Mrs Schuurs: I can only speak for the Oxford County Board of Education and the schools my children are in. We don't seem to have as great a difficulty with that time span. Being Home and School, we know the rules, we know how to approach the board. Our principals don't seem to have those kinds of complaints, not that I have heard, in the schools that Home and School represents in Oxford county.

As far as parents wanting to have control, I as a parent do not want that responsibility of an elected official.

Mr Duncan: I would have thought too that if you create larger school boards it would become more cumbersome and more difficult to get simple approvals.

Mrs Schuurs: Exactly.

Mr Duncan: Wouldn't that make a lot of sense to you, that if you have a much larger school board that's further removed from local communities — which is what this is doing; it's taking away local governance, local authority. When we look at the so-called ELMO board in this region, my goodness, how is a much larger bureaucracy going to function better, unless of course the government's true agenda is to do away with school boards, in which case —

Mr Young: When you ran for the leadership, didn't you say you were going to —

The Chair: Mr Young, you don't have the floor.

Mr Duncan: According to the Sweeney report, we said we would, absolutely.

Wouldn't it make sense to you, since the government is arguing that these processes would go more quickly,

that if you create boards this large the process would in fact probably be slowed down?

Mrs Schuurs: Mr Duncan, in my report I'm recommending that the Oxford county board stay the Oxford county board. Our board has been feasible; it has cut back. As you heard the chair of our board say, 61% of the dollars spent in Oxford go back into the classroom. We can't argue against our board that way.

Mr Wildman: I appreciate your presentation. I agree with your view that the central question is funding, and until we know what the new funding formula is, questions about administrative structures —

Mrs Schuurs: We can't answer.

Mr Wildman: — can't really be answered, exactly. Would you support an amendment to the bill that would mean it would not be implemented until after the funding formula has been published and consulted about across the province?

Mrs Schuurs: Definitely.

Mr Wildman: I hope the government will accept such an amendment.

Mrs Schuurs: So do I.

The Chair: President Schuurs, thank you very much for being here with your colleague to present your views.

1410

CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES, LOCALS 1477, 3615, 1146, 2512

The Chair: Our next presenter is CUPE Locals 2512, 3615, 1477, 1146, Duncan Haslam. While Mr Haslam is coming to the table, I remind members that when you're given two minutes per caucus, it includes the response, and we should try to give as much time to the presenters to give their views. It wasn't directed to anyone in particular, just a general comment that we're here to listen.

Welcome, Mr Haslam. We're very pleased to have you here with your colleague; perhaps you'll introduce her. You'll have 15 minutes to make your presentation.

Mr Duncan Haslam: It will be my pleasure to introduce to you Marie O'Brien, who is the vice-president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2512, which represents the office, clerical and technical employees of the Waterloo Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. I would like to read my brief because there are many things happening with Bill 104 that I think have to be put on the record, and as I understand Hansard, the only way it can be put on the record is if I read it.

As a CUPE national representative, I am here today to express the concerns of education employees from the Perth, Huron-Perth, Oxford and Waterloo boards of education, specifically dealing with the proposed language under section 335(3)(f) giving the Education Improvement Commission the function to "consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on how to promote and facilitate" — make easy to achieve — "the outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards."

I have taken the liberty of inserting the Oxford Dictionary meaning of "facilitate" into your proposed

language to eliminate any confusion regarding what section 335(3)(f) says and really means. The proposed language in the Fewer School Boards Act is a clear indication that the government intends to contract out, or outsource if you prefer, to the greatest extent possible the work performed by non-teaching employees. It does not state that it will contemplate outsourcing or contracting out but rather how it will do this.

Since the government has already appointed some members of the Education Improvement Commission, and in particular Dave Cooke, who has stated that he finds it is absolutely necessary to fire union members, and Premier Mike Harris has admitted that there will be fewer CUPE members, education employees have every right to be concerned for their jobs.

We have to wonder if the government considers contracting out as job creation or maintaining the status quo, versus our point of view that this is a loss of jobs. The jobs will still be there in the school system, but they will be offered to the lowest bidder, who cannot and will not pay decent wages or employee benefits such as pension, dental or medical coverage and still make a profit.

Non-instructional union members from these boards total 52 weeks of employment as full-time and 41 weeks as part-time employees. The yearly payroll expenditures cost an average of between \$1.2 million and \$5 million annually. This represents approximately 4% of the average total annual school board budget; see appendices A through D.

If current employees are lucky enough to obtain one of these positions with the new employer, how are they going to maintain a standard of living when they are already the working poor? The average non-instructional school board employee working full-time makes between \$21,000 and \$30,000 annually. I will point out to you that when we had the social contract, the vast majority of these people were not affected by that; they were all considered LICO employees. After the school board employee drops even lower in wages, how will they be able to contribute to the economy, since they won't be able to afford even the basic necessities that every human being is entitled to, let alone a few luxuries that keep the economy running?

We believe a job is something that provides people with enough income to support their family. It allows buying of shelter, clothing, food and transportation. This new type of job is not a real job but a fast-food job. Where will the government find revenue to run the province once many former taxpayers' income levels are reduced and they can't afford to support the businesses that depend on their money?

A further problem to address is the value and stability our support workers bring to the education system. As much as taxpayers wish to see better use of their tax dollars, we don't believe this means at the expense of our children's needs. Will the children feel as safe, nurtured and content to be in an environment conducive to learning if the support staff is constantly changing and there are new faces to be found throughout their school? It is a known fact that children need consistency. Will consistency be a part of the school community when an

employee is working for \$7 an hour? I doubt it. I am sure they are looking for a better-paying job from their first day at the school.

Students deserve and taxpayers expect our schools to supply reliable and well-trained staff and services, with studies showing that students do better in clean and comfortable learning environments. Will these services be maintained after restructuring or, as experience and time have shown, will our schools suffer because privatization costs are equal to or more than what is already spent on running the education system?

Some statistics gathered regarding careers in the school system and supplied by boards of education are referenced below:

The Perth County Board of Education has an average length of service for secretarial and clerical employees of 14.5 years and 9 years for technical employees. The Huron-Perth board has an average length of service of 6.85 years. Oxford County Roman Catholic Separate School Board has an average length of service of 6 years. Waterloo Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board averages 10 years for secretarial, clerical and technical and 9 years for educational assistants.

Children know the secretary, educational assistant and custodian in their schools. They go to them for help and assistance, and support staff are considered friends as well as figures of authority.

I'd like to refer you back to a brief we heard this morning from the London Council of Home and School Associations. It says, "Every elementary student in a school knows the school custodian by name; every student and many parents know the secretary." As examples of non-instructional staff, they are vital components of any school. "These are the friendly faces that our students trust. They are the eyes and ears of our schools. How will a school board ensure the safety of our students if these were to be outsourced? Will a profit-driven company research and be accountable for their employees?" Will there be pride in our schools?

A high percentage of non-instructional staff live in and around the neighbourhoods of the schools they work in. These jobs, although not highly paid, are considered great positions because it allows people to work within the vicinity of their home and children. Due to the fact that 90% of these positions are filled by female employees, the bonus of working for school boards allows women the opportunity of working outside the home in valuable and satisfying careers but still being available when their children need them.

Not by any stretch of the imagination can you consider in today's economy that women are still bringing home that little extra cash for the cookie jar. With 50% of parents being divorced and the high rate of single parents, these career positions are critical. Once again, women will take the brunt of government cutbacks and be penalized for their nurturing and caring personalities, which attract them to careers working with children.

My members want an explanation of why the definition of classroom costs encompasses only the teacher and the classroom supplies. What about the educational assistants who assist the junior kindergarten and kindergarten teachers in their classrooms who have an average

of 25 to 30 students enrolled? Can 4- or 5-year-old children be stimulated when there is a ratio of 1 to 28 in a classroom and the teacher hasn't the time to answer a question or give individual attention to help a child? What about the challenged child who needs some assistance in class but has to either stay at home or be institutionalized because there is no educational assistant to keep him or her in the classroom? Are these not legitimate classroom expenses, or do the very young and challenged not merit the effort of our government to supply the knowledge and tools to become productive citizens?

Do we dare mention the library technician in the school without acknowledging that rural schools are the public libraries and that access to a well-stocked city library is not readily available in rural areas? But I'm sure students will be more than pleased when there is no reference material available to complete projects.

We would be remiss if we forgot to mention the private sector computer companies that are rubbing their hands in glee in anticipation of the service agreements with the underlying fine print for extras instead of calling the one or two technicians on staff for computer breakdowns and software training.

There are so many important services that are critical to children it is hard to list them all. We need the speech pathologists and guidance counsellors, who fall outside the definition of classroom essentials. Many families could not afford these services. In cases where children require the assistance of guidance counsellors, if they aren't there when needed, what happens then?

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I would like to recap some statistics.

The Perth County Board of Education has a total of 68 CUPE employees on staff, of which 51 are part-time, for an average salary of \$23,400, with the remaining 17 full-time employees averaging \$25,877 and the technical group averaging \$34,050.

For Huron-Perth, it is 40 educational assistants averaging \$17,353, eight full-time secretaries at \$30,615 and 19 part-time at \$21,330.

Oxford County Roman Catholic Separate School Board has 48 CUPE employees with 45 part-time averaging \$10,447 annually and a total yearly payroll of just over \$500,000.

Waterloo Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board has 400 employees, of which 314 are part-time with the average of the secretarial-clerical-technical being \$22,928 and an educational assistant's average being \$17,282.

Those averages include, by the way, their benefits and pension contribution.

Many of our members have written to their local MPPs, particularly the Conservative ones — which is turning into a waste of time — seeking clarification of the government's intentions. To date they have not received answers to their clearly stated questions; however, they have received replies that do nothing to allay their concerns. See the attached.

Perhaps today a member of the government caucus would respond to their concerns. Is it your government's intent to amend the Labour Relations Act by deleting

successor rights? Is it your government's intention to pass legislation or regulations which will restrict our ability to bargain collectively? Is it your government's intention to pass legislation which would override current provisions in our collective agreements?

The statistics I have mentioned are attached to the brief for your future consideration.

In closing, I bring to this committee from the 533 CUPE education members who are referred to throughout the brief and whom I am proud to represent the following recommendations to amend the Fewer School Boards Act:

Protect collective agreements and bargaining by removing Section 335(3)(f) and not allow the outsourcing of non-instructional positions. The members of the Education Improvement Commission should be held accountable for their decisions and not be placed above the rule of law, as they are.

Thank you for your attention. I'll answer any questions if you have time.

Mr Duncan: Thank you, Mr Haslam. Very briefly, I see that you're a national representative of CUPE. How do the collective agreements, particularly in rural school boards in Ontario, compare with other collective agreements, not necessarily in the education sector, for similar-type jobs?

Mr Haslam: For female jobs?

Mr Duncan: Yes.

Mr Haslam: Ours would be ahead. The rate of pay and the benefits would be better in the public sector than they would be in the private sector. The private sector is largely unorganized.

Mr Duncan: No, I mean in other organized settings.

Mr Haslam: They'd be comparable.

Mr Duncan: So they're not out of line with other organized settings.

Mr Haslam: As long as they're organized. If they're non-union, there's a big difference.

Mr Wildman: I looked at your appendices and I see appendix G, February 28, 1997, a letter to Mrs Diane Binyon of Kitchener from Wayne Wettlaufer, MPP for Kitchener. If you look at page 2, it relates specifically to the section you were highlighting. It says:

"Section 335(3)(f) — Bill 104 would not require outsourcing by school boards. The commission's mandate would be to conduct research and make recommendations to the minister on how to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional service.

"If you had read the above in Bill 104, you could not possibly have worried one bit about what Sid Ryan has to say as he seems to be adding his own interpretation to this bill."

"Yours truly,

"Wayne."

So what's the problem?

Mr Haslam: Mr Wettlaufer obviously reads Webster's Dictionary. I don't. I prefer the Concise Oxford Dictionary of English. Mr Wettlaufer has a problem with the English language obviously, and obviously the bill was written by a lawyer and lawyers like to use words that can hide the real meaning. That's been my experience with them.

Mr Wildman: But you interpret "promote and facilitate" to mean they intend to do it.

Mr Haslam: No question about it, and if they didn't intend to do it, why didn't they answer our questions? The questions that we referred to the members are not hard but they haven't answered them yet. They've given us replies, but I could have got a better answer from my dog, to be honest with you.

The Chair: I feel I should apologize for all lawyers, being one, but I'll pass on to the Conservative caucus.

Mr Froese: Thank you very much for sharing your concerns. I have sympathy for your argument and I understand your concern. I also believe, though, in the best possible price for the best possible service for the best deal for the taxpayer. I know your recommendation is to get rid of that section and that's possibly not going to happen. If the bill gets third reading and royal assent, if you could have any part of that section changed, other than taking it right out, what would you be comfortable with?

Mr Haslam: I suppose you could clearly define what "non-instructional staff" means, because we think we know what it means and you may have a different meaning. Clearly, if you look at the figures, there's no money to save if you outsource the office clerk. To be honest with you, it's peanuts. We're dealing with peanuts here. In the whole scheme of a board that may have a budget of \$30 million, our portion of it may be \$4 million. There's no money to save. Most of these school boards — and you heard from two of them this morning. In 1992 the Perth board turned 12-month jobs into 10-month jobs, and in 1996 the Waterloo regional Catholic board just dumped 66 people on to the street from 12-month jobs to 41-week jobs. That's a loss of income.

The school boards, with all due respect to them — and they're my opponents on most occasions — are cheap out here. They're frugal. They don't throw tax dollars and money around. If you're looking to save money, you won't find it out in rural Ontario, because they are — and I'm not insulting them; that's the way they are — very frugal people. If I can paraphrase Leo Cahill, they throw nickels around like Ralph Szabo throws around manhole covers. They are guardians of the tax dollar, and like them or not, that's what they do and they do it well.

The Chair: Mr Haslam and Ms O'Brien, let me express the appreciation of the committee for your attendance here today and your presentation.

ONTARIO ENGLISH CATHOLIC TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION, WATERLOO UNIT

The Chair: May I call upon the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, Waterloo Unit: Patricia Cannon, Richard Costello and Wayne Buchholtz. Welcome, Madam President. We're delighted to have you with us today.

Ms Patricia Cannon: First of all, I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce my colleagues. Mr Richard Costello is our CEO of the secondary branch affiliate of OECTA, and Wayne Buchholtz is the CEO of our elementary branch affiliate. As president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, Waterloo Unit, I am pleased to be able to make this presentation here today.

I'd like to preface my remarks by stating first that I am deeply concerned about the vast and all-encompassing nature of the changes the government is making in education. My second concern is the extreme speed at which these changes are being implemented. There has been insufficient time allowed for people in general to develop an understanding and awareness of the ramifications of so many radical changes.

I wish to state at this time that the education system, at least in our opinion, is not broken as Mr. Snobelen is so fond of saying. Is it in need of change? Yes, of course. Any viable, growing system can only continue to be such by encouraging appropriate appraisal review and change. This is something schools and teachers are good at and something that has been ongoing throughout Ontario's history.

Changes made, however, have always been made based on sound research and direction. Where is the research that indicates why these drastic changes are necessary? Where is the appraisal-review documentation that shows how this new system will produce better results and enhance student achievement? Where is even an outline of this new improved curriculum that has been promised?

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The parents in this province are only now beginning to see the truly destructive nature of these changes and how they will negatively impact on their children's education and their very future. Before they have time to react, the changes will all be in place.

Bill 104 appears to provide the instrument or tools needed to allow the government to take control of education governance. Additional announcements regarding funding changes allow them to complete the process. These measures will enable the government to continue its extraction of hundreds of millions of dollars that it needs to cover its election promise of a 30% tax cut.

The number of boards in the province has been cut in half, and although Waterloo region has been affected in only a minor way through the loss of three schools to the new French district board, there are several other areas of concern to us within this document.

The creation of the Education Improvement Commission is perhaps one of our greatest concerns. Currently, trustees are voted into office by taxpayers and have powers to manage the local system. Under the new structure the EIC will have control over the management of each board by virtue of powers some of which include approval of board budgets, review all board business, appointment of auditors as it sees fit and making recommendations regarding financial accountability of the existing boards.

The local autonomy will gradually be eroded as new trustees for January 1998 will be limited in number, and under the new restrictions will no longer have the right to make financial decisions without EIC approval. They can no longer use local taxes to make accommodation for the special needs unique to their particular region. Because of this lack of control, many current special programs could be vastly curtailed, changed or lost due to the inability to raise funds for those areas. In Waterloo region, we have already made great changes to our JK and K programs by combining the two classes into larger groups because of previous funding cuts.

This year, if we want to keep the program, other major changes in how the program is delivered may also have to be made, such as changing from a half-day, every day delivery to a full-day, alternate day method. If we do not make the savings there, then some other program will have to be cut. What else can we afford to lose? In Waterloo there's not much left to cut.

Can we give up our speech and language teachers? Those were gone 10 years ago. Can we give up art and music consultants and programs? We lost those back in 1990. Can we give up special classes for the hearing-impaired? That class closed in 1993. Can we give up social workers and psychologists? We've reduced our complement by 20% in 1995. Can we give up teacher-librarians and chaplains as teachers? We lost those in 1996. We have had reductions as well in religion, special ed, guidance and outdoor education consultants over the past several years.

Curriculum coordinators, consultants and specialized staff such as language and speech pathologists and teachers of the deaf and blind all help students with special needs in our schools. It will prove almost impossible to service those needs, because most school budgets will no longer be able to fund for those programs. If they in some way do exist in some areas, those resources will be stretched beyond limit in the new extended boards.

Because trustees no longer have control of some funding through local taxes it will be much more difficult to plan for any programs or projects unique to their particular area. This lack of funding control also then begs the question, who would teachers, or any other employee group for that matter, bargain with? The board trustees appear to have no significant control over any moneys within the board and therefore could not offer any type of financial settlement to an employee group. Would this then lead to regional or perhaps province-wide bargaining? Nothing has been said.

We have also been promised a new and vigorous curriculum that will be standard across the province. This would obviously mean great changes in textbooks and resource materials for many boards. To replace just one textbook at an average cost of \$28, I've been informed, for one subject, in one grade across the province would cost millions of dollars, somewhere between \$4 million and \$5 million to replace one textbook. Imagine how expensive a total change would be. Will the costs now come out of the designated budget or will there be additional funds to cover this?

Many decision-making powers guaranteed to Catholics under the Canadian Constitution are now going to a government-appointed commission. This infringement of rights does not sit well with many separate school supporters. The fact that the decisions of the commission are binding and cannot be reviewed or questioned by a court should not sit well with any Ontario residents.

Bill 104 will allow the EIC to "consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on how to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards."

First, we must ask who falls into this non-instructional category, bearing in mind the address Mr. Snobelen made

on January 13 when, introducing these changes, he stated, "We are going to focus resources where they should be, in the classroom." We could not agree more. However, special ed, librarians, guidance counsellors, principals and VPs, music, art, phys-ed teachers and the like, in our opinion, are all part of that classroom. They are part of the resources needed to have an effective classroom. They represent the diverse nature of a well-rounded education that Ontario students need to succeed.

Looking at the second issue, secretarial, custodial, maintenance and other non-teaching personnel, OECTA is of the view that it is socially unjust to restructure our educational system at the cost of making workers economically vulnerable or disadvantaged. By having other employers provide workers to the school system at reduced wages, working conditions and less job security, we encourage a downward spiral that has a significant impact on the security and quality of life that these workers are able to provide for their families.

It is also extremely important to consider that these secretaries, custodians and TAs are now permanent staff members who have developed an attachment, a loyalty to their school. Some work many extra hours, unpaid, to get particular jobs done within a school, to be part of the team. Some coach teams or work on school clubs. They are part of the school team.

It's unlikely this kind of commitment would develop in an outsource agency employee. So again I might ask, how would these changes "enhance the performance of our students" or "ensure a high quality of education that meets all students' individual needs," as Mr Snobelen stated on January 13? What these changes do provide is another way to cut costs within the system by allowing boards the opportunity to replace qualified certified teachers with non-certified people and to allow the replacement of secretarial and custodial services with cheaper outsource alternative employees. Not only is it wrong; it simply makes no sense.

There are many other areas of concern within this document, all of which have been addressed by our provincial brief prepared and delivered by our president, Marilies Rettig, our first vice-president, Marshall Jarvis, and Claire Ross, our general secretary, all of which we are in agreement with. I would like to, though, re-emphasize and reiterate a few of the recommendations that were outlined in the provincial document:

First of all, separate school boards should have access to funds outside the control of the provincial government in order to maintain their constitutional right to manage their local schools.

The amalgamation process should be slowed down to allow more consultation and reaction from the general public and allow more consideration for implementation guidelines to be put into place.

The EIC should be allowed to function only after it has been legally legislated to do so and that its authority should be limited to settling amalgamation disputes unrelated to personnel and collective agreement issues.

Bill 104 should guarantee successor rights for branch affiliates which represent teachers under the School Boards and Teachers Collective Negotiations Act and for the occasional teachers under the Labour Relations Act.

Bill 104 should guarantee all rights that are currently covered by collective agreements.

Non-instructional services should be explained in a way that reflects the reality of true classroom expenses.

Outsourcing should be rejected as a means of lowering wages and negatively altering employment conditions for working people.

Further, additional funds — \$1 billion is suggested — should be available to all involved in the amalgamation procedure and/or the implementation of new government curriculum and reporting procedures.

I thank you for this opportunity.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation. You've used up all of your available time. We're very grateful to you and your colleagues for being here.

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MIDDLESEX COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: I call upon the Middlesex County Board of Education, Ted Anderson and Bob Harvey. Welcome, gentlemen. Thank you very much for being here this afternoon.

Mr Bob Harvey: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am Bob Harvey, the trustee involved, and welcome as well Ted Anderson, our director, who, if we have an opportunity to have questions, will be very helpful to me, I'm sure, in answering any of them.

I am pleased to extend a sincere thank you on behalf of the trustees and the staff of the Middlesex County Board of Education for this opportunity to speak before you on the board's position on the Fewer School Boards Act, 1997.

While we are sure you have heard this message on countless occasions, we must be on record as indicating that the Middlesex County Board of Education is opposed to amalgamation. We are confident that there is no information or evidence that amalgamation will serve the needs of students more effectively or economically, and the government's economic interests are being placed ahead of the educational needs of students. However, prior to commenting further on the reasons why the board is opposed to the current proposed legislation, it is necessary to express concerns related to the minister's wide-sweeping remarks regarding the rationale for such significant changes in the structure of education in the province.

A major part of the government and ministry rationale is evident in the statement the minister made when introducing the legislation. He stated: "School boards have shown little accountability in their spending habits. While total enrolment rose by 16% between 1985 and 1995, school board spending increased by 82% and property taxes shot up by more than 120%."

We believe that we are just one of many boards of education that can prove that the minister's statement is a clear exaggeration of the situation and a denial of provincial responsibility for a good portion of the increases that are evident in board of education budgets. Attached in the appendices to this report are clear indications of the actual increases in the budget over the past 10 years for the Middlesex County Board of Educa-

tion, indicating both increases in the provincial mill rate and increases brought about by the board of trustees, who have been quite responsible.

The appendices will show that over the period from 1985 to 1995 the Middlesex County Board of Education increased its budget by 50.69%, not 82%. Property taxes have increased by 60.77% over this period, not 120%. However, because of increases in the provincial mill rate, the province is directly responsible for 35.7% of the 60.77%, or over half of the increase. The Middlesex County Board of Education is therefore responsible for the 25.07% remainder, or about 2.5% per year on average. Clearly, if one partner in an enterprise is able to download expenses to another and then point the finger, it seems that any rationale suggesting culpability is rather suspect.

While the charts show that provincial downloading through the adjustment of the provincial mill rate is the greatest factor for increases in our local board's budget, we are moved to suggest that an even more dramatic factor in the process is the actual downloading of the costs of mandated programs that form part of that 2.5% average annual increase. These increases have been the result of increases in federal and provincially mandated programs being imposed on local boards. They include such things as Canada pension, unemployment insurance premiums, the goods and services tax, the provincial sales tax, workers' compensation increases, pay equity, health and safety, the extension of early education programs etc.

It must be understood that these programs certainly have merit and that the boards of education have been prepared to accept their responsibilities for delivering the programs. One such initiative of considerable merit, and perhaps the most significant example, has been the mandated changes in special education programming. Following the passage of Bill 82 in the early 1980s, many provincial programs were turned over to local boards. The administrators, teachers, educational assistants and other support staff of these provincial institutions became part of the expanded special education services in local boards, with profound effect on local boards' budgets. Specifically in Middlesex county our educational assistant costs alone have risen from \$50,000 to over \$1.2 million in those 10 years. While boards readily accept these significantly increased responsibilities and costs, anyone has to wonder why the minister, who downloaded these programs, then points to the imposed cost increases to criticize board budgeting and charge irresponsible spending.

Once all of these changes are factored into our education budget, it actually shows that board-related increases have been lower than those of the Ontario consumer price index. It is our opinion that the minister has not made any case for amalgamation by substantiating irresponsible spending on the part of Middlesex trustees. Similarly, the fact that \$150 million might be saved by such massive changes in the delivery of education is not a rationale respected by local trustees and officials either.

In this regard, it's important to note that the government, in its usual show of fanfare regarding any of its programs, outlined how all ministries would be required to establish business plans that would include a thorough

review of current activities. Every program and service must be put to the test. Are they relevant to the needs of students, parents, educators and the public? Clearly there are no impact studies that justify the Fewer School Boards Act, 1997. It would seem then that the concept of business plans is one dedicated more to political rhetoric than to the substance of well-researched decision-making.

In conclusion, the minister's rationale for the huge downsizing in the number of school boards is not based on facts or studies and demonstrates little regard for the real needs of students and the vision of public education.

Returning to the concerns the trustees of our board have with regard to the proposed amalgamation of Elgin, Middlesex and Oxford county boards and the Board of Education for the City of London, we wish to indicate that the creation of a board of close to 90,000 students is not in keeping with our vision for grass-roots government and community-based education systems.

While a case may be made that there are other boards in the province of over 100,000 students, one must concede that these boards have gradually grown into such large units, and these boards are often based in significant urban population densities and within more confined geographical areas that readily justify their existence. However, to create a board of education of such size from boards of 10,000 to 15,000 students seems to be a total disregard for the effective educational programming done by these boards in their respective jurisdictions.

The assumption that the school advisory councils will effectively replace the local jurisdiction is one that is open to challenge. Our experience with school advisory councils indicates that for every person who sees this as a chance to run a school, there are many others who have no desire to take on such a role and others who clearly indicate they do not have the time to accumulate the background knowledge necessary to make responsible decisions.

This is in no way a reflection on the quality of people who for many years have assisted our board through home and school associations, individual parent associations and other volunteer activities. This support has characteristically involved many of the areas given over to school advisory councils and goes well beyond the perceived hot dog day, meet-the-teacher venues and fund-raising. Since there will be approximately 193 school advisory councils in our proposed amalgamated board, it would seem unlikely that they will have the same relationship with the fewer trustees and senior administrators of the new board. In essence, there will be an estimated 10 trustees instead of 64. Instead of 4,200 people attempting to access one trustee, there will be 50,000 people.

These realities will undoubtedly lead to frustration on the part of school advisory council representatives. One must question how long it will take to re-establish the existing networks as a way of maintaining consistency and direction within families of schools; how long before, in fact, families of schools establish networks that will address centres of interest within former county areas and look strangely like a structure reminiscent of our board of education. This is a real possibility as many county people will see it, and do see it, as a way to preserve community schools and to provide a consistent voice within the larger district boards.

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We must reiterate that the trustees have always been most impressed by the excellent rapport evident between parents and the schools of our county. In essence, Bill 104 is a move away from all those human elements that are involved in education and panders to the notion of "bigger is better" and the trendy criticism by the business world. It would seem that many business people and ratepayers simply support the government's initiative to provide tax reductions.

To those who demand that education be run like an industry, educators and trustees are forced to counter that they are not talking about widgets or products here and that students, who are the raw materials, cannot be treated as they might be in business or industry. If the raw material in industry does not measure up, the owner goes to a new supplier. School opportunities, however, must be available to all students no matter their limitations. Businesses conclude mergers overnight with limited thought to the people involved. The same could be done in education, it might be said, but if one considers the human element involved in this most human of enterprises, there must be a change in time lines for the transition to fewer school boards.

Trustees and administrators are getting increasingly frustrated by the announced short time line of January 1, 1998, and the absence of concrete guiding principles to work from. The officials of our boards have met with our proposed partners over several weeks and are fully prepared to try to resolve certain issues as they arise. However, with the proposed powerful local education improvement committees, there is a reluctance to proceed too far because of the possibility of being overruled by government-appointed officials. For example, as evident even in a recent memorandum, the early announcement of capital building project allocations was tempered by correspondence from the ministry that left everyone in great confusion regarding the acceptability of moving forward on the projects and whether or not there was a process by which boards of education would be able to finance their portion of capital projects.

With revenue reserves of over \$3 million, money raised within Middlesex county, trustees believe they should have the freedom to use these funds for the much-needed capital project and program renewals that our county truly needs, but we are prevented from doing so by the unfair dictates of Bill 104.

Similarly, the legislation will not be finalized, it appears, until most boards of education have already completed their budget process for 1997. This leaves boards feeling that they are expected to go on the field and play the game and not get the rules until the game is over. This is hardly a responsible process with which to force boards to make decisions.

In addition, there is already evidence of significant costs being incurred by boards in the negotiation process for the creation of the district boards. Yet there continues a clear indication that there will be no provincial assistance for these additional costs, which will be expenditures beyond the classroom, of course, and we all know how they're looked upon.

Parents also have reason to question whether economics will be the major part of the decision-making process. Such concerns as the forced closure of small community schools that have been rejected under local county boards may become a reality under the economic philosophy of the current government.

Without a confirmation of succession rights for our employee groups, we must stand by helplessly and hear the rhetoric around outsourcing and downsizing. The whole culture of boards is being changed as people see their jobs in jeopardy and acknowledge the absence of the rewards that go with faithful service and the expectations that years of working together have produced.

It must be clarified that the Middlesex County Board of Education is a disparate county system with no major anchor cities or towns, necessitating the busing of 80% of its students. This government declares that transportation is a non-classroom item that must be limited. It is our understanding that you have to get the kids to school under safe and reasonable conditions before you can educate them. Because our transportation costs are over \$7 million and 11% of our board's budget, in spite of the board having for years exercised cost reduction through double busing and sharing with the Catholic system, you have many people — trustees, administration, parents and students — looking for guidelines from the province that will ensure that there is some social justice in the so-called commonsense initiatives being put forward.

These serve only as a few examples of how the concerns of the stakeholders of the Middlesex board are greatly increased by a short time line and the absence of really clear rules to the process.

In conclusion we must indicate that in spite of an atmosphere of great turmoil and opposition to the basic elements of amalgamation, the trustees of the Middlesex County Board of Education and their staff are prepared to do all that is necessary within the legislation to realize the greatest possible benefit to the students of the county.

The Chair: Regrettably, we have no time for questions, but I want to thank you and Mr Anderson, on behalf of the committee, for being here.

Mr Duncan: I have a question for the government.

The Chair: I guess Mr Young can take it.

Mr Duncan: Question 16, which I have placed per the distribution of last night, asked the government or the PA for information contrasting mill rate increases in each board with increases in the consumer price index. The response I was given was, "See attached document entitled Report on School Board Taxes, 1996." A careful read of that shows quite clearly that they have not responded to the question. They have provided the document that contrasts the provincial grant change with the school board tax change and have ignored the mill rate question, and they've ignored the consumer price index.

To be specific again, I will re-place the question, because here we see for the first time a very clear indication that the statistics the minister and the government have been using with respect to the rise in education mill rates over the last 10 years, compared to consumer price index and compared to provincially mandated programs, are clearly distorted.

I would ask again, and I place the question formally: For the last 10 years, would the government provide to us a comparison, on a school-board-by-school-board basis, of education mill rate increases compared to the consumer price index for each of those years. The minister has publicly given us the cumulative total that they have which in our view is obviously distorted. Therefore I would assume that information is readily available on a board-by-board basis. I will pose that question to legislative research as well to ensure that we can get accurate information.

Mr Young: We will endeavour to get that information.

The Chair: I've expressed before that I would like the answers to all questions before the end of the session today so that we can be in a position to be informed before clause-by-clause. If it's at all possible, the Chair would appreciate that information being given today.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION, NIAGARA SOUTH

The Chair: The Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, Dale Ford. Welcome. Thank you very much for being here. I would ask you to introduce yourselves for the record.

Mr Dale Ford: On behalf of the members of the Niagara South Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation I would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before the standing committee on social development to present our views and concerns regarding Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act. I'd also like to introduce Alice Russell, the communications officer from the Niagara South Board of Education, to this committee.

I'm the president of this local, a teacher and an adjunct instructor for Drake University in Iowa. I am here today because I believe in parliamentary democracy and because part of the task of our profession is to educate the children and youth of Ontario about its values and process. With Bill 104, the government is moving too far, too fast and with too little open debate. We cannot accept this as a legitimate way to do the government's business.

Last year Ontarians were presented with the infamous omnibus bill, trampling on rights and responsibilities of the citizens and municipalities and giving the provincial government extraordinary powers to disregard the rule of law at its whim. With Bill 103, the government attempts to usurp the powers of duly elected city councillors and hands over the control of Toronto to a board of unelected trustees and a transition team selected by the government.

1500

Now comes Bill 104, which establishes an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the complex job of reducing the number of school boards from 129 to 66, cut trustees from 1,900 to 700 and cap their annual pay at \$5,000. The worst, most arbitrary and authoritarian aspects of the omnibus bill and Bill 103 are incorporated into the powers of the EIC. The role of democratically elected trustees has been superseded by the unelected commission and its sweeping mandate with unknown criteria to review and amend budgets any way it considers appropriate. This commission is not accountable to

parents, employees, taxpayers or trustees and its decisions cannot be reviewed by the courts.

By taking over education funding by removing it from the local property tax, it's clear the province will control the purse-strings, asking people to have blind faith that these major changes will not hurt classrooms. While Queen's Park would like people to believe that with the amalgamation of school boards \$1 billion can be cut from the education budget without harming students, we believe this is not true. John Sweeney of the Ontario School Board Reduction Task Force concluded that merging boards will save \$150 million. Our primary concern is that if Queen's Park takes control of education funding, communities will be helpless to protect students from funding cuts that are clearly being contemplated by the provincial government.

We worry that policing, fire protection, child care, welfare, housing, transportation and health care will have to be downloaded on to homeowners to compensate for the province's \$5.4 billion in education costs, which now will come from general revenues. Are we to believe that these exchanges of responsibilities will be revenue-neutral? Property taxes and rents will have to go up a great deal to pay for these services. In the Niagara region, this may mean fewer services for seniors, cuts to fire protection, user pay for ambulances, lower-quality day care, higher fares for Niagara Transit, overcrowded classrooms, and in a recession more welfare, more taxes, more poverty, more crime.

The government doesn't seem to have a shred of evidence that the system it's about to impose on us will work any better. In fact, it may be a lot worse: less democratic, less accountable, more remote and more bureaucratic than the one it replaces.

Queen's Park wants to eliminate community decision-making in education and seize what seems to be total control. For more than 150 years, communities have worked with provincial governments to provide an accountable and efficient public education system. Boards are an integral part of democratic government and civil society. With the province's assault on democracy, we are experiencing at first hand a lesson in Ontario civics in 1997. Not only does this legislation transfer power from a community institution to centralized provincial bureaucrats; Bill 104 and the government's insistence on limited public consultation and debate, where committee members were provided with materials profiling the individuals making presentations, including political and employment histories, demonstrates a disdain for the citizens of the province and may be an infringement of privacy.

Thomas Hobbes, in his work *Leviathan* in 1668, theorized "that the Commonwealth arises when all citizens transfer the right to be ruled to a government in order to avoid the state of nature where everyone has a natural claim to everything and where everyone's life is nasty, brutish, and short." We fear that there's a very real possibility that the government's potential for downloading or offloading will return us to that nasty and brutish life and will drain the lifeblood from the community — and turn the province an uncompromising blue. Libraries, recreational facilities, basic social services are all more needed by the poor than the rich, yet they

seem to be seen as a burden. Our seniors, the chronically ill, our health care workers, day care and the educational sector must not get lost in the shuffle.

Cutbacks are the result of decisions made by politicians. We fear that Bill 104 and the latest cuts being imposed by our provincial government are not about debt and deficit; they're about keeping the promise of the Common Sense Revolution. In that document, the Tories said they would cut the provincial share of income tax by 30%. To meet this commitment, we fear that amalgamation is a red herring to take another \$600 million to \$1 billion out of education. These cuts will seriously reduce support for every child's education, his or her future prosperity, and the future of Ontario.

We're worried that the current pace and sweep of change will create long-term problems in its wake. I understand the province is in a fiscal crisis that you're trying to fix, but I'm disturbed by the legislating of a tool that allows unnecessary, broad and invasive powers that could be misused. Rather than giving the people a sense of government in charge, there's widespread anxiety that the government's strategy will take money and jobs out of communities such as the Niagara region.

We recommend:

That Bill 104 be amended to recognize the legal status of the teacher collective agreements during the transition period until new collective agreements are negotiated between the new district boards and their employees;

That Bill 104 be amended to set forth the obligation of the new boards to accept liability for the salary and benefits of employees transferring to the new legal entity;

That Bill 104 be amended to provide legislative protection regarding the maximum distance for any involuntary transfer of school board employees;

That Bill 104 be amended to remove any role for the Education Improvement Commission related to the promotion of outsourcing of non-instructional services;

Finally, that section 339 of Bill 104 be amended to specify that school board employees be included as full partners in local advisory committees established by the Education Improvement Commission.

We can make a difference and we must all shoulder the responsibility of defending our way of life in Ontario. If we are so confident that this revolution that the government proposes is a matter of common sense, why don't you trust that you're able, through consultation, deliberation, argument and persuasion, to take along others in this vision? Thank you.

Mrs Johns: I'd like to thank you for your presentation. I appreciate also that you think we're moving too quickly and that we should move more slowly. One of the concerns I have with the amalgamation is that I want to ensure that every taxpayer and every person and every parent and every child in the province — that their funds, which fund all of our education and everything this government does, of course, are protected.

I understand that when they did this in other times that there was some concern that all dollars be spent in the areas where they should have been spent, as opposed to just spending some dollars because they're there and they may not be there tomorrow. How would you move forward if you didn't choose an education improvement

committee to monitor those dollars, I suppose? Can you tell me what you would suggest? You seem like a learned person and maybe you could give us some other suggestion on that.

Mr Ford: First of all, the formulas that have been in place for transferring funds have worked well in most instances, and rather than throwing out the baby with the bathwater, I think we could fine-tune that system rather than starting from scratch.

In my local community the town of Fort Erie is geographically lucky enough to be close to Buffalo. The town of Fort Erie has many bingo halls. The town of Fort Erie raises all sorts of money for the local community schools. I teach in Niagara Falls and we also teach in Welland, in Port Colborne, where we are not so lucky. In the same instance, we're not bold enough to perceive that we deserve part of their funds for the rest of our board as well.

I'm not giving you a solution. I just think that what worked before will continue to work until there has been more research done on a more equitable way of transferring those funds. I don't think that by amalgamating the boards you're going to necessarily resolve that issue.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate your taking the time to get into some of the broader social concerns and consequences of the shift back to the municipalities of the province having taken over education funding as well as addressing the concern with educational funding itself. But I should tell you that as of today, those of us who have been concerned about the \$1 billion being cut from education appear to have been misguided. The Globe and Mail says it may be \$1.5 billion that's going to be cut.

1510

I also particularly appreciate your emphasis on the whole issue of the democratic process, and that's where I choose to ask you my question. You've talked about the powers of the Education Improvement Commission. One of the things I've just learned today in responses from the ministry to a question I asked is that this commission will not only continue to exist for four years, even though the new boards are supposed to come into place for next year, but it will be given the power to supervise and monitor the election process in the year 2000. I know that's a new idea, but can you conceive of any reason why in a democratic society we should have an arm's-length body supervising our elections four years from now?

Mr Ford: In response, I certainly would have to take issue with that particular stance. Going out in that type of mandate certainly is not a democracy that we're used to. We have elected trustees who represent people in our area. With the amalgamated boards they'll be that much further remote, and for some other body to supervise elections, other those that are already in place, would seem inappropriate.

Mr Wildman: In regard to the story that was in the Globe and Mail, I'll show you this. This actually is not Mr Snobelen grabbing the money. It is Cuba Gooding Jr getting his Oscar last night. But you know in the movie he said, "Show me the money," and the story right beside it says that a source in the ministry says: "[T]hey've come up with something that takes \$1.5 billion out of the

system with the grant allocation. This is the other shoe that's dropping." What effect do you think taking that magnitude out starting with 1998 would have for the education system?

Mr Ford: I think it would be disastrous. The \$400 million that has been taken out prior to this has certainly led in the Niagara area to a lack of resources and replacement of things that have worn out just through natural processes, and the elimination of our junior kindergarten because we weren't able to fund that program.

If we continue to take money out of the system, like some of the previous speakers have said, I really believe you're going to drain everything except for a basic core, allowing no flexibility for local boards to deal with local issues or local educational mandates they might have from the citizens who do pay taxes.

The Chair: Thank you very much, President Ford and Ms Russell, for being here. We appreciate your input.

NORFOLK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCILS

The Chair: I call the Norfolk County Public School Community Advisory Councils, Andrea Stillwell. Welcome, Ms Stillwell. We're pleased to have you here.

Ms Andrea Stillwell: Good afternoon, Madam Chairman. I'm Andrea Stillwell, the spokesperson for the Norfolk County Public School Community Advisory Councils. I'm the parent of a grade 1 child and a grade 9 child.

The Norfolk County Public School Community Advisory Councils is a group which consists of the chairpersons of each school's council and the principals of each school. There are 21 elementary schools and five high schools spread over a rural area with small towns. Before I came here today, we also met as a group with representatives of the separate school community advisory councils. Toby Barrett represents us in the Ontario Legislature.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to express our concerns about the Fewer School Boards Act, 1997.

I'd like to start by saying: "Major changes cannot be expected to happen swiftly. Thorough preparation and planning is crucial. The involvement of all concerned stakeholders is imperative. The enthusiastic cooperation of the classroom teacher is absolutely critical." Gerald Caplan, co-chair of the Royal Commission on Learning, is the person I'm quoting.

We are stakeholders in the education process. We are the parents of the children who will be affected and we are interested in the best possible education for our children. This bill does not describe or delineate how accountability will be improved by reducing school boards.

There are no reports to show us how money will be saved. Where is the thorough preparation and planning? In the past, when an overhaul has been planned, and there have been others, everything was on the table. In 1969 we had legislation, we had reports and we had costing. Where is the preparation and planning?

Norfolk county has approximately 10,000 students in both the public and separate boards. We have been frugal.

We are a rural board and our board spends very little on administration. Last year \$3.5 million was cut from a \$60-million budget at the Norfolk Board of Education. What did we lose? We have less central support for curriculum. We have fewer teacher positions. We now have more split grades. There have been cutbacks in special programs, family studies, and design and technology. There are fewer substitute teachers, we share principals and we share buses. Our supply and service budget has not increased for three years.

Where does this lead? It leads to providing the children with the things that they need, but who will decide what our children need as opposed to what is a frill? Will it be the district 23 amalgamated school board that will decide? Will it be the Ministry of Education and Training or will it be the school advisory council at each individual school? How will the money be distributed?

The new system says that parents will have more input on major decisions affecting their children's education, such as:

(1) Programs the schools offer. Picked from what? Where will these programs come from? On whose say-so?

(2) We'll have more input on ways of reporting student academic progress. What, from school to school we'll have a different report card?

(3) We'll have more input on student discipline. How? Where is the thorough planning and preparation? How will more input at the school level provide a clear and consistent standard for what students should be learning and when they should be learning it?

Parents and the advisory councils are expected to fill the vacuum left by the dwindling number of school board trustees. The democratic process is narrowed. Rather than the whole community electing and participating in the elections, only the school's parents and staff will elect, and historically we know that this tends to attract a small turnout and dedicated volunteers. It's a small power base. Parent councils will have no institutional memory. When the child leaves the school, the parent is ineligible and the parent leaves with their expertise and commitment. In our rural area, we move from school to school. My child goes to a school from grades 1 to 6, then 7 and 8, and then 9 to whatever year we're going to end high school eventually. Representation on the district board is reduced by this act. This definitely limits accessibility for parental input.

The Fewer School Boards Act creates the Education Improvement Commission. There's no term for the Education Improvement Commission in the legislation. I understand that regulations have given it a deadline of December 31, 2000. What guarantee do we have that it will disappear at that moment?

History books remind us that when the personal income tax was introduced in Canada, it was promoted as a temporary measure to raise funds. We're all paying income tax; it's 1997.

1520

Mr Wildman: In 1917.

Ms Stillwell: That's right. Thank you. The democratic process is seriously undermined by the appointment, not election, of representatives to the Education Improvement

Commission. It's unacceptable when input from students, parents and staff is essential to recommending and implementing only those changes that will improve education. There is a maximum of seven people on the Education Improvement Commission who will oversee the transition, and they do not have to answer to the public. They cannot be challenged in a court of competent jurisdiction. Why do they need these powers?

This commission has the power to appoint committees under sections 338 and 335. How will these committees interact with the advisory councils and the school boards and what power will they have? What part does the advisory council have in this system? The commission has the power to appoint a two-to-three-person committee under section 339 before any power is delegated by the commission. What place will they have in the hierarchy?

We are not opposed to fine-tuning the system in place, but the revamping proposed is too drastic for a system that already works in spite of its drawbacks.

What people will be able to serve on the district boards? Limit the trustee honorarium, but don't take it away by making it negligible. There may have been abuses, but why is everyone punished?

Statistics have been misrepresented to the public. In the last six years, provincially determined property taxes have increased. They've increased almost 50%. Provincial grants have decreased 3.5% and locally determined property taxes, under the sole control of school boards, have decreased over the province by 14.3%. Per pupil spending in Ontario is less than five other province and territories and more than six provinces and territories. We have no details of what kind of money the new boards can expect to get. Where is the preparation and planning? There is no commitment to maintain the present level of spending, a commitment that has been made by the government in health care, but we don't know what the level of spending will be for education.

"For every dollar school boards spend in the classroom more than 80 cents is spent elsewhere," according to Minister Snobelen. On what? Heat, light, teacher preparation — this isn't the classroom, teacher preparation? — constructing and maintaining classrooms, libraries, librarians, psychologists, guidance, transportation, principals, who are teachers and team leaders. The entire school is the classroom. We need support, and who decides what a frill is and what a need is?

This act is to improve accountability and community involvement in the education system. We believe we're losing accountability, losing accessibility and losing local decision-making. How does this save money? How does this improve our children's education?

In conclusion, we urge legislators to vote against this bill until such time as costing is done and evidence is available as to how these changes will improve education for our children, for my children.

We have grave concerns that this act and the proposed legislation that flows from it will prove to be the government of Ontario's way of dismantling our excellent public school system to the detriment of our children and this province's future. Thank you for your time and attention.

Mr Skarica: We've heard from trustees in Windsor, Sudbury and Thunder Bay during these proceedings that they're in favour of the legislation and feel that there are

cost savings available by streamlining the bureaucracies and not having two or three superintendents but having one. How would you address that road, their view of it?

Ms Stillwell: You're talking about an extremely large area. District 23 will be Haldimand, Norfolk and Brant. You're talking about very different needs. Norfolk county is essentially a rural area with small towns, Brant is a much larger town and the school board in Haldimand tends to be rural as well. What you're losing is the ability to respond to the small community and the small town and the rural needs by amalgamating.

Mrs McLeod: I'll have to check the record to see exactly what Mr Skarica's comment was. I notice he touched on Thunder Bay, and I can assure you that there were no official representatives of school boards in Thunder Bay who were supportive of these particular amalgamations. One of the things we heard consistently was what you've said today, which is we've only got one piece of the puzzle. They want to know what the funding looks like. They want to know what the impact's going to be. There is a great concern, as you've said, that unlike 1968-69 there are no cost impact studies, nothing to show that there's actually going to be dollars saved, in fact a lot of concern that it's going to cost more.

We also have today's story which seems to confirm an anxiety a lot of us have had that there are going to be major cuts. We thought maybe \$1 billion; it now looks like it could be as much as \$1.5 billion out of education. Just what would that do to the chance for an equal access to quality education for the kids in Norfolk county?

Ms Stillwell: We're already cut to the bone. Our administration is already a very small percentage of what is spent in the area. Our costs are getting the children to

the school, moving them from school to school, having programs at different schools so that they have to travel from place to place. If we're going to cut costs even more, we're going to have less ability to offer programs which are already not in every school, as they travel around from place to place trying to get the programs that others take for granted.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much for your presentation. It's been argued that this is part of a larger package and that in taking the cost of education off the residential property tax, providing the total amount through grants, rural areas like yours should benefit, that there will be more equity in the system. What's your reaction to that? That's been one of the arguments in favour of these changes.

Ms Stillwell: Show me.

Mr Wildman: "Show me the money."

Ms Stillwell: That's right. I don't have anything to tell me. I'm a parent with children at the local schools. I have no idea what the benefits are or what could be accomplished because no one has told me. They have told me that fewer school boards will give me a cost saving which will enhance my child's education.

Mr Wildman: It's \$150 million.

Ms Stillwell: How does this enhance my child's education?

Mr Wildman: It doesn't if they take \$1.5 billion out.

The Chair: Ms Stillwell, thank you on behalf of the committee for coming here today and for presenting to the committee. We really appreciate it.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are recessed until 4.

The committee recessed from 1529 to 1603.

Report continues in volume B.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North / -Nord PC)
Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre / -Centre PC)

Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes:

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River ND)

Clerk / Greffière: Ms Tonia Grannum

Staff / Personnel: Mr Ted Glenn, research officer, Legislative Research Service

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**Standing committee on
social development**

**Comité permanent des
affaires sociales**

Fewer School
Boards Act, 1997

Loi de 1997 réduisant
le nombre de conseils scolaires



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Tuesday 25 March 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES
AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Mardi 25 mars 1997

Report continued from volume A.
1603

FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 RÉDUISANT
LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Continuing consideration of Bill 104, an Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 /
Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système, en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

The Chair (Ms Annamarie Castrilli): Ladies and gentlemen, welcome back. We have a couple of matters to deal with before we begin the formal presentation. First, the researcher has a response to Mr Duncan's question.

Mr Ted Glenn: Unfortunately, Mr Duncan, the information you requested is only available from two sources. One is the ministry; the other is the boards themselves. Given the time constraints, we can't conduct independent research into the boards themselves, so the information will have to be forthcoming from the ministry. I'll just let them deal with the question, rather than —

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): Thank you very much.

The Chair: The second matter is the motion we deferred from this morning. Mr Duncan, would you like to speak to the motion?

Mr Duncan: In its presentation, the Oxford County Board of Education outlined a number of alternatives. One of the government members at the time asked, I thought, some thoughtful questions around it and I think it would be useful to have the ministry respond specifically to those alternative proposals so they can be given due consideration by this committee and then by the Legislature. I felt they merit a response from the government.

The Chair: Further debate?

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): I'll be speaking against the motion for one primary reason, Madam Chair. I'd like at the appropriate time to table another motion which would be somewhat more comprehensive and would cover not only the boards of education that presented here today but boards of education across the province, but with the same object in mind.

The Chair: Would you be kind enough to give us the gist of the motion, and then we can deal with it afterwards.

Mr Young: I would move that the standing committee on social development urge the Minister of Education and Training to advise the proposed Education Improvement Commission to review the submissions this committee has received regarding proposed district school board boundaries in Ontario.

That would include all submissions and all school board boundaries.

The Chair: You're not actually making the motion; you're just informing Mr Duncan —

Mr Young: If this is the appropriate time, I will make the motion.

The Chair: No, we're still discussing the first motion. But that would be the nature of the motion you would make?

Mr Young: Yes.

The Chair: Further debate on Mr Duncan's motion?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Madam Chair, I just suggest that I don't think the two motions are in any way inconsistent or incompatible. I think it should be a given, in fact, that the education commission, if it is to advise the Minister of Education on the board boundaries in any way, is looking at all the submissions that have been made to this committee; otherwise, it is indeed, as we have been saying, a complete and total sham to have been going through these hearings.

What Mr Duncan's motion has suggested is that where boards have presented a specific alternative — he's not suggesting that every submission receive a specific response from the ministry, but where there has been an alternative suggested, in this case the Oxford board, it does merit a specific response.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): This reminds me a little of what happened with the motion I put with regard to Hornepayne and the subsequent motion put by Mr Skarica. I think it would be appropriate to respond to the specific recommendations made by the Oxford County Board of Education; then, if the government members wish to move a motion to deal with the wider issues related to other boards, we can do that. As has been indicated, the two motions don't appear to be contradictory.

Mr Duncan: I'm not suggesting that the committee endorse what the Oxford board has recommended or that what the ministry had proposed is entirely bad. I'm simply suggesting that we had, I thought, particularly in the case of this amalgamation, which has generated considerable attention not only locally here but across the province — I think it's in order that the minister respond to the alternative proposals, as to why they might be useful or why they're not useful. I don't think it precludes or is in any way opposite of what you're suggesting elsewhere.

The Chair: Further debate? Seeing none, all in favour of the motion? Opposed? The motion is defeated.

Mr Young: I'd like to move that the standing committee on social development urge the Minister of Education and Training to advise the proposed Education Improvement Commission to review the submissions this committee has received regarding proposed district school board boundaries in Ontario.

The Chair: Debate on the motion?

Mr Wildman: I would like to move an amendment, to add to the end "with a view to making alternative recommendations for school board boundaries."

The Chair: Discussion of the amendment?

Mr Young: I'd like to speak against the amendment. The amendment would change the meaning of the motion; it would be directing the Education Improvement Commission or directing the minister, as opposed to what we're attempting to do here, which is urging the minister to advise the Education Improvement Commission. One of the main purposes of the act is to empower the Education Improvement Commission to review the findings.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, I was looking for the motion that was originally moved by Mr Skarica coming out of northern Ontario. I think this motion differs significantly from that first motion. If I recall correctly, the original motion he moved in relationship to the northern Ontario boards was to go directly to the Education Improvement Commission and that it was "to look at" the board boundaries in light of the presentations that had been made by northern Ontario boards. I'm not sure whether this new motion changes the first one, whether it means there's a difference in their response to southern Ontario boards than there was to northern Ontario boards, or whether somebody in the ministry just told Mr Skarica that he was a little bit too responsive to the submissions we'd heard.

1610

The Chair: You're speaking to the motion. We are still speaking to the amendment.

Mrs McLeod: I think it's relevant to the amendment too, because it's specifically related to the change of board boundaries, which in my understanding was included in the original motion Mr Skarica placed in relationship to other boards.

The Chair: You are in favour of the amendment.

Mrs McLeod: Yes, I am, because I think it might make this motion somewhat more consistent with the first one.

Mr Wildman: For the information of the committee, I have the motion that was passed unanimously by the committee. It was moved by Mr Skarica with regard to

northern boards, and it was, "That the standing committee on social development urge the minister to advise the Education Improvement Commission" — actually it should say "proposed Education Improvement Commission" — "to review the submissions this committee has received regarding proposed district school board boundaries in northern Ontario, particularly regarding the challenges of distance and technology infrastructure."

That is quite specific, and it actually refers to the submissions that had been made by presenters in the committee. I think the amendment I put is in the spirit of the motion that has been passed with regard to northern Ontario boards.

The Chair: Any further debate on the amendment?

Mr Young: I wasn't here at the time, but I think the meaning of that motion is clearly to address concerns relative to distance in the north and weather and the possibilities of technology improving education etc, whereas this motion is much more comprehensive and goes beyond where we wanted to go.

The Chair: Further debate on the amendment? All in favour of the amendment? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

We'll now vote on the motion. All in favour — oh, I'm sorry. Ms McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: I will vote for it, but it really is offensive to me as a member of this committee that this motion should be here. This motion says, "We urge the minister to advise the proposed commission to review the submissions this committee has received." We've been arguing this. To those who have been around with us for the last 10 days, we've been questioning the relevance of what we've been doing from the time this committee started. The only thing that could possibly have made it relevant is if there are amendments tomorrow to the act as a result of the submissions or if indeed the commission, should it be established after this is passed, has been paying attention to the submissions we've been receiving.

We've been concerned that the commission is out doing consultations before the act is passed, that it's doing it at the same time we are supposedly doing the consultation with affected groups on the legislation. This motion, in my mind, really confirms that everything we've been going through here is a sham.

Mr Wildman: Frankly, I'm a little troubled by this, and I'll explain why. I'm wondering on the one hand how this will respond to the concerns, for instance, of the submitters with regard to the Lanark, the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, the Prescott and Russell and the Leeds and Grenville boards, where they specifically asked not to be all combined into one but that there be two boards if there were amalgamations. On the one hand I'm worried about that.

On the other hand I'm worried about what the passing of this motion will mean for the motion that has already been passed that deals specifically with the north. Are the concerns that have been raised in northwestern Ontario, for instance, about having one board the size of France west of Thunder Bay, somehow lost in this? Does this supersede that other motion? If it does, are we simply asking the commission to look at all the submissions, which I hope they would do anyway, and not home in on

the specific ones we heard about from presenters where they had alternatives? I'm concerned that this just means we're saying as a committee to the commission, "Look at all the submissions," and they may not then give the weight that I think they should to the submission in eastern Ontario, for one, and to the motion that was passed previously by the committee with regard to northern Ontario.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): I really don't understand the opposition's concern, because we're addressing exactly what their concern has been all the way along, and that's the boundaries. In the previous motion, we specifically dealt with the north in that particular situation. All this does is put some more emphasis on making sure the commission deals with school board boundaries across the province. That is what their concern has been right from the beginning; that's been the concern of the presenters. All we're saying is, let's ask the commission, emphasizing the commission to look at it again.

Mr Duncan: All this motion says is it advises the commission to review the submissions to the committee — a commission that reports to no one, is responsible to no one, is not compelled to respond. That's part of our concern, that there's nothing that compels a response. "Sure, we reviewed it. That's great. Now who are we accountable to?" Nobody. So all of the thoughtful presentations, including that which was done by Oxford, which I thought was very thoughtful, a compelling case; including Homepayne; including the eastern Ontario example that was cited earlier — in my view, all this does is it just passes the buck and there's no guarantee that any kind of review will result in any meaningful changes.

What the amendment would have done, in my view, had we passed the amendment, is said unequivocally that this committee believes action should be taken on some, not all, of them. So I regret that we're leaving it to this unaccountable body really without any kind of force, just to advise that it review them. I don't think that puts enough weight on the significance of the problems that have been identified by a number of boards and other individuals throughout the province.

The Chair: Further debate?

Mr Young: I'd really like to get to the presenters, so I'd like to move we put the question.

The Chair: Absolutely. All in favour?

Mr Wildman: Madam Chair, we have to vote on whether we put the question.

The Chair: That's what we're voting on, whether we're putting the question, Mr Wildman. All in favour? Sorry, you wanted to speak to that, to whether we're putting this to —

Mr Smith: Yes, I want to speak to the motion, if I may.

The Chair: All right, but first we're voting on whether to put it to a vote because Mr Young has asked that we put this to a vote. All in favour of putting this to a vote? Against? Very well, so we go to the vote.

All in favour of the motion? Opposed? The motion is passed.

Mr Duncan: I have a question. I'd like to ask the Ministry of Education to respond to the alternative

proposals that have been put by the Oxford board of education with respect to alternative boundaries so that we can have that response for tomorrow, please.

The Chair: Very well. Are you asking that of the researcher?

Mr Duncan: The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education.

Mr Young: We'll endeavour to get that information. I hope there's time by tomorrow.

Mrs McLeod: There would have been more time lines had the motion passed.

I have two questions that have become more urgent in my mind since the motion was just passed. One is whether it is now a requirement that we pass motions on all submissions that have been received by this committee in order to ensure that the minister will urge the EIC to consider all submissions and not just those related to school board boundaries.

Mr Young: No, it's not necessary. I made this motion in response to Mr Duncan's concern with regard to one specific school board. I felt it held merit and because it held merit it would be appropriate to propose it for all the boundaries. There's no question in my mind that the Education Improvement Commission, once active, would review all the responses and every Hansard record from this committee hearing. Some people might view it as redundant but I think it was helpful to get it on the record and give them that direction.

1620

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate the fact that you weren't present yesterday, Mr Young. Mr Skarica had served notice that he would be bringing in a motion similar to the one you presented. I have a standing question — and I hope Mr Skarica would be responding; I expect a response today — and that is whether, should this act become law and the commission be established, this committee would have the opportunity to meet with the Education Improvement Commission to determine just which of the submissions they have heard and are considering.

Mr Young: I would speak against that.

The Chair: It wasn't a question.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Skarica said he would take it back and consider it favourably.

Mr Young: Okay, so your request is to take it back to the ministry for consideration?

Mrs McLeod: Yes, and Mr Skarica was to return with a response.

The Chair: The issue is, when can we get a response to the question that was put by Mrs McLeod to Mr Skarica?

Mr Young: I will get your response by the end of the day.

LORNA COSTANTINI
KATHY BURTNIK

The Chair: We can proceed to our first presenter, Lorna Costantini. Welcome, Ms Costantini. We're happy to have you here.

Mrs Lorna Costantini: I'd like to introduce Kathy Burtnik.

The Chair: Nice to meet you. Thank you for being here. You have 10 minutes for your presentation and you can use it as you wish.

Mrs Costantini: Thank you, Madam Chair and committee members. We are privileged and honoured to bring our thoughts to you. We appreciate having the opportunity to express our opinions to you.

Kathy and I come as parents of students in Lincoln County Catholic school board. We also have the privilege and honour myself as being the chairperson of that board and Kathy as chairperson of the English-language section. Between the two of us, we have nine children, ranging from three to 22, quite a wide spectrum. Kathy is serving her first term as a trustee and myself the second. Kathy's youngest is about to start her education career and my oldest has given up on the education community.

We come to you today with a variety of experiences and insights, but what we want to stress to you is that we come as parents and that's the perspective that colours most of our comments. Unfortunately, we can't get rid of the trustee part of us, but we are trustees because we are parents and, despite some of the opinions to the contrary, we are no less parents today than on the day we were elected.

We have provided a written summation of all our thoughts to you. We won't be able to give it to you all, but we want to talk about what we think this bill is about, and that's to effect savings and increase accountability. To do that, four things have been proposed: reduce the number of trustees; create new district school boards; prevent employees and their spouses from holding office as trustee; and the establishment of the EIC.

We support in principle the direction that the Ministry of Education and Training is taking on these actions and we also congratulate them on the establishment of the EQAO, the College of Teachers and, most importantly, the introduction of reform in education finance, which will ensure equality in funding for all students in Ontario. But if there's one message that we want to leave with you today, it's this: Take the time and do it right.

The education of the children of Ontario must be the most important thing in your mind when the decisions are being made. The changes proposed in this bill must improve the education system, not diminish it. We appreciate the difficulties of trying to effect such wide changes and not having everybody agree with you. However, if it's done properly, with no hidden agenda, and those who are entrusted with the education of our children are made more accountable, and the students receive the highest quality of education that is currently being offered in the province, who could argue with that? So take the time and do it right.

Mrs Kathy Burtnik: To achieve the savings and increase accountability, it is essential that a plan of implementation be developed first and then communicated to the partners in education. We are not suggesting that the proposed legislation be shelved, but we see several issues that are going to be problematic in a hasty implementation of this bill.

If you accept the premise that boards should amalgamate, then it only makes sense to ensure that the process is as smooth as possible with the least amount of impact

on the numerous people, and especially the students that will be affected. Probably in our 10 minutes we're going to say to you 20 times: Take the time and do it right.

The reduction in the number of trustees: In the province of Ontario and in our board, trustee honoraria are but a small portion of the huge amount of dollars that are spent on education. There are other costs over and above the honoraria. There's the staff time spent with trustees. There's mileage to and from meetings, which is going to increase with larger district school boards; copying and distribution of documents — and it goes on and on.

Our board has, and this is our trustee hat at this point, in the past taken a number of actions which we believe are responsible. Last year we reduced our honoraria without being given direction from the ministry to do so. We were at \$6,600; we are currently at \$5,940; \$5,000 is in sight.

We have tightened up our policies. The issue to be made here is that the trustee envelope specific to our board is very small but we recognize that every dollar counts and every dollar that can be, should be devoted to the classroom. In isolation they may seem insignificant, but what is important here is the priority that drives our decision-making: children's needs first. We hope this government uses the same priority in making their decisions.

We support a reduction in the number of trustees. In our opinion, our amalgamated board would have 33 trustees, a very large number — not required. However, if a reduction in the number of trustees is to be done, you can't have a set number for each jurisdiction of each board dependent on the number of electors. There are communities that need to be considered.

With the reduction in trustee allocation, it is imperative that open lines of communication be maximized with today's technologies. E-mail and the equipment to support it must become commonplace in future boards and financially supported in the new funding model being designed by the ministry. Therein lies another hidden cost that will diminish the savings of amalgamation.

There's been considerable dialogue about the role of the trustee and that by removing the responsibility for raising taxes this will leave more time for trustees to devote their attention to their main mandate: to develop and oversee policy. Our concern lies in the new district boards' abilities to blend current policies. It is the responsibility of trustees to set clear guidelines and policies so that staff can move in the direction that has been set by the trustees.

With the new district school boards there is a real possibility that administration will be the continuum and they will be the ones making political decisions. That is a concern. Our parents are already expressing their concerns about the blending of board policies. They want to be assured we have a process in place that asks for their input. Their input is considered very seriously when we develop a policy. They want to know that this process we have in our board is going to be the process that continues.

Mrs Costantini: Take the time and do it right.

Next we're going to talk about the actual amalgamation of the boards. I guess the achievement of this whole

process is to cut administrators, change the board facilities, get at the costs that are inherent in those things. But the question we really want to see validated here is, how are you going to ensure those savings are directly put into the classroom? What safeguards are you going to have that they don't go into a provincial coffer and not actually get to the children?

In 1994 our board initiated a study of this whole entity of amalgamation. We did it with the ministry staff assistance and we suspect that the findings were really an initiative towards Bill 104. I've included in the package the issues that were raised in this study for your information.

Take the time and do it right, because the issues that came out were things like delivery of program. Whose programs are you going to use if they're delivered differently? Do you assume that in our situation, while we have reduced staff, we are going to take the staff from the other board and make them the program consultants? I ask you — they are delivering one model here and we're here with another one — who decides when and where? It's a problem.

1630

Then you have employee contracts, the biggest problem. How do you blend them? They're at different rates. Do you automatically give the teachers with a lower salary more money? Who's going to answer that question? We also have a special case here that our education assistants are represented by two different union affiliates. Which one will it be? Who's going to answer the questions?

These are the things we're asking. That's why we're saying to you that you've got to solve these problems ahead of time, because it's going to create chaos, in our opinion, for our children. I didn't say don't do it; I'm saying to you, take the time, solve the problems and do it right. The biggest concern for myself as a parent is I do not want to see labour unrest jeopardize my child's education, and that's a real possibility if we don't solve the problems ahead of time.

When the study at our two boards was finished, after having identified the issues, it came out that the funding model is crucial to making this successful. Everybody knows that, but I don't know the funding model. I'm not sure that we know it, except here it came with the paper. I don't know it as the chair of the board. I'm a little upset about that, if it's true.

Mrs Burtnik: I'll jump in with, "Show me the money."

Mrs Costantini: It has to be that before you take the steps to amalgamate, make sure that funding model actually does work; develop an effective, equitable method for redistribution of the funds before you remove the ability of schools to raise their own funds; create a reporting mechanism to ensure that funds are directed to the classroom.

The Chair: Mrs Costantini, can I ask you to wrap up, please.

Mrs Costantini: I've got so much to tell you, but one of the big issues you have to deal with is that parents have not shared their responsibility as parents in education. I'm sure that happens because every one of us here

has created a dimension where educators have had to fulfil parents' mandates. I ask you, how can you effect the changes to 75% of our budget, and that's contracts and staff, if you don't deal with the social issue of teachers having become surrogate parents for children?

There is more in here. I would like longer to get to you. Please take the time to go through, because we have realistic viewpoints from two different viewpoints, as trustees and parents. Take the time and do it right.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs Costantini and Mrs Burtnik. We do appreciate that you took the time to come here and have prepared this brief. Let me assure you that the full text will form part of the record of the committee.

Mrs Costantini: I just want to express a personal concern. It should be identified that individuals are only afforded 10 minutes when we asked for the opportunity to present. That was never made clear — just for the future.

The Chair: We'll note it, and thank you. I didn't realize that was the case.

ROBERT VAUGHAN

The Chair: May I call upon Robert Vaughan, please. Thank you very much, Mr Vaughan, for being here. We look forward to your presentation.

Mr Robert Vaughan: Madam Chair and members of the committee, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to speak to you this afternoon. I am a trustee with the London board of education and a parent of a child in public school. My comments and suggestions are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of the London board of education.

I understand that your committee has received many criticisms over the proposed Bill 104. I too have a concern, but it is quite different from those already put forward. My concern is that the government has not gone far enough in its attempt to reorganize school boards.

For all of the changes contemplated and suggested by the government thus far, none has reflected the desire of Ontarians for greater choice in education. To put it succinctly, the government should eliminate all school boards, empower school councils, bring in charter school legislation and allow taxpayers to direct their taxes to the schools of their choice, whether they be separate, public or private. However, since we now have Bill 104 in front of us, I'll attempt to make the best of it and hope that some of my suggestions may be of use to you in your deliberations.

You will find my presentation, my written presentation especially, candid. I am making it only after careful consideration and consultation with other like-minded trustees and friends.

Much of the rationale behind Bill 104 stems from a perception by the public and the provincial government that school boards are administration-heavy and trustees are not making decisions in the best interests of parents or taxpayers. Critics often cite the enormous pay increases trustees have given themselves and the continuing property tax increases levied in the face of declining enrolments. As a school board trustee for the past two

and a half years, I would attest that the concerns of the public and the government are correct.

In general, and in my opinion, school board trustees no longer act in the best interests of the electorate. Instead, they act as advocates for the public education system and as spokesmen for public school administrators. I have included some of my own observations on the matter in the appendix of my written proposal in front of you.

Most of my observations can be condensed into a single theme: that trustees develop an unprofessionally close and friendly relationship with school board administration and staff and it is this unprofessional relationship which prevents most trustees from speaking against the administration or making decisions which could upset the status quo at a school board. For example, many cost-cutting decisions, restructuring decisions or program changes could mean the laying off of friends, so these decisions are routinely avoided.

How does Bill 104 address this situation? Quite frankly, it doesn't. While the bill does reduce the number of trustees and administrators, this will only concentrate power into fewer hands and does nothing to affect this buddy-buddy relationship.

What must happen to keep administration out of governing and trustees out of administering is nothing short of a complete divorce between school board governance and school board administration. I am suggesting that a separate school board governing body be created. For the sake of argument I will call it a district education council. Such a body would be composed of publicly elected trustees whose responsibilities would be much as they are today: approve the budget of the school board, or not approve, as the case may be; negotiate with staff on a district-wide basis; establish educational policies in concert with school councils; and act as advocates for parents and taxpayers who may have grievances with school boards.

In many respects a district education council would have many of the same powers as your proposed Education Improvement Commission. It would act as a watchdog over the activities of school boards. I have expanded on a few details on just how a district education council would work in appendix 2.

School councils: Bill 104 proposes a decrease in the number of trustees. I would suggest a corresponding increase in the powers of school councils. With or without my suggested district education council, school councils should be empowered to take over some of the duties of trustees. In particular, I believe that school councils should take on many of the parent advocacy roles trustees are often called upon to perform. Councils could act as front-line ombudsmen, resolving disputes between parents and school staff with the board of trustees or district education council ready to handle appeals only. With such added responsibility, I would recommend that staff members of school councils no longer have a vote on council but act in an advisory capacity only.

School councils have expressed to me their frustration in trying to get things done with absolutely no power to do anything. Many council meetings have turned into propaganda sessions with the principal and staff taking

control and using the meeting to educate community members about the way things are done at that school. As one school council chair put it, "When you are on the council you come to the reality that the unions and boards dictate everything and truthfully are not interested in any person's opinions other than their own." I've included that full letter with the permission of that person in appendix 3.

I have a few other recommendations for the committee to consider, but for the sake of brevity I have listed them at the end of my presentation. Just to highlight one of them, I would strongly urge you to empower school councils. With the reduction in trustees, which, by the way, I agree with, we must take up the slack with school councils.

Once again, I would like to sincerely thank the committee for its time and attention. Your task is a heavy one and the lives of many people will be altered greatly by your decisions, whatever they may be. I wish you good judgement. Thank you.

1640

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Vaughan. We have time for one brief question per caucus.

Mr Duncan: Thank you for your presentation. One of the points that has been made by a number of delegations both for and against this bill is the notion that parental involvement in education has to become greater, and one of the things I've done just as a result of all these presentations is go and find out what the literature says about it. The literature doesn't talk about administration. It talks about parental involvement in terms of children learning; that is, "Spend an hour reading to your child, spend an hour doing mathematics with your child, and don't worry about school board budgets."

I guess my question to you is twofold: One, shouldn't we be encouraging parents to take time to do studies, with their younger children especially; and two, wouldn't you be afraid of the same kind of cosy relationships developing between parent councils and principals that you allege occur today between trustees and school board administrators?

Mr Vaughan: To answer your first question, yes, I would encourage parents to get involved in the education of their children. However, I don't believe that reading to a child is going to teach them how to read. It gives them an enjoyment of reading, but only learning how to read —

Mr Duncan: With all due respect, the literature is completely different —

The Chair: Mr Duncan, if you could let Mr Vaughan respond.

Mr Vaughan: Actually, I've read a lot of literature on whole language and the philosophy surrounding it. Again, my sitting here reading to a child is not going to teach that child how to read. However, I think we can disagree on that.

The second part of your question was, would there be a cosy relationship between parents and teachers if parents had more say in school councils, for example? Trustees are the people who hire, fire and discipline staff of school boards. These are the people who govern school boards in that respect. They negotiate the con-

tracts. Parents do not. So in that respect, an unprofessionally close relationship is detrimental to that governance. I do not see the same kind of relationship at a parent-teacher level being detrimental to that kind of relationship.

Mr Wildman: Thank you for your presentation. I just was looking at your recommendations at the end. In number 4, you say: "Set all Ontario trustee allowances at \$15,000. Anything less will financially prevent many good people from seeking the office." You know that in Bill 104, it sets remuneration at \$5,000.

Mr Vaughan: Correct.

Mr Wildman: The maximum.

Mr Froese: Where does it say that?

Mr Wildman: It doesn't say that. That was what the minister said he was going to do. Sorry.

My question is, why do you think in many cases what you're proposing is going up rather than down? One of the savings that Mr Snobelen has identified is cutting the remuneration as well as cutting the number of trustees.

Mr Vaughan: I would agree with cutting the number of trustees. However, being a trustee, I know full well the amount of time and effort that's put into it as a job. As a matter of fact, running for any elected office requires a lot of time and a lot of money, and to make the remuneration \$5,000, you are going to effectively shut out a lot of people who cannot afford to run and a lot of people who could afford to run but cannot afford, then, to take the time away from their well-paying job for a busy trustee job.

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): Thank you for your presentation, Robert. I think certainly it was very evident throughout your strong views with respect to separating school board administration from governance and in doing so proposing a district education council.

Some have argued that the proposals under Bill 104 will lead to ballooning administration. Do you perceive, either under your proposal or under Bill 104, that there is going to be the challenge of a growing administration as a result of this particular legislation?

Mr Vaughan: I'm sorry. I missed the preamble to your question.

Mr Smith: Are you concerned at all that either through the proposals of this bill or the concept that you're advancing in terms of a district education council there will be a proliferation in the size of administration centred around education?

Mr Vaughan: I guess that's always a danger. The thing is that if you have, for example, in the city of London 50,000-odd students to provide schooling for, you're going to need technically a number of administrators to do the job, to administer. It's almost like it's a given: You have so many children, so many schools, and you're going to need so many administrators, one would think. So reducing school boards, while it would streamline — and I am in favour of it — administration and governance, I really don't think the government is going to save a lot of money at this. It will save money, which hopefully would go into classrooms. However, I don't think creating another level of governance is going to create more administrators, and I don't think necessarily creating one central or larger board will create more

administrators either. I don't think many of the changes in 104 regarding this amalgamating are going to save a lot of money. They will save money and therefore they should be done, but a lot of it? I don't think so.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Vaughan, for appearing before us today and giving us your thoughts.

DON WRIGHT

The Chair: I call upon Don Wright, please. Mr Wright, thank you very much for being with us today. Welcome to the committee. We look forward to your views.

Mr Don Wright: Thank you, Chairperson and members of the committee. It's a pleasure to be here. I have a very short presentation to make today. I'd like to say in advance of that that I'm a retired teacher, that I live in London, that I have five grandchildren who are in Ontario schools, and I have some concerns, and I'd like to share those with you today.

Because of the complexity of the bill and the short time we have together, I don't want to run through the bill with you, but what I'd like to do is comment on a couple of aspects of the atmosphere of that bill and then focus on the commission.

As the Common Sense Revolution restructures Ontario, we are seeing an unprecedented wave of legislation which changes both the face and the foundations of our institutions and our services. It is too much. It is being done too fast, to too many people. Citizens lack adequate opportunities to participate in the process. This is wrong. What we're doing here is wrong.

The restructuring of education is taking place within this broad restructuring of Ontario. It again is too much, it's being done too fast, it's being done to too many people, and that's wrong.

Minister of Education John Snobelen's need to invent a crisis in education was both intellectually and morally wrong. It not only created a false focus for discussion, but it alienated educational stakeholders and it soured the atmosphere necessary for a positive, collaborative, creative discussion of educational issues and constructive change.

The minister's artificial split focus on items inside the classroom versus matters outside the classroom in their costing is equally wrong, both intellectually and morally. John Snobelen understands that removing the classroom support resources from the classroom makes no more sense than removing the ground support resources from passenger aircraft. The security, health and safety concerns of parents for their children as they move forward in our classrooms are no less than those we all feel for aircraft passengers. The split vision approach to our classrooms is misleading, it is simplistic, and it is wrong.

1650

I want to focus now for the balance of the time on the Education Improvement Commission. The conscious decision to limit presenters to 10 minutes really precludes any possibility of going through the bill in detail, so let's look for a moment if we can at several aspects of the implementation commission.

Because of the astounding powers of the commission, it would be more appropriate for the bill to be renamed

The War (on Education) Measures Act. Unless the trustees and chief financial officers of our school boards have become secret members of unlawful motorcycle gangs, or unless they have become smugglers of illegal weapons, or perhaps organized terrorists who secretly plan the violent overthrow of the Ontario Ministry of Education, the draconian powers of the commission are not necessary.

No authority within a democratic government except its parliamentary body should have the power to take arbitrary action with respect to the finances of elected democratic agencies — for example duly elected school boards; to suspend the right of due process in Ontario; to abrogate the right of a citizen to counsel and the right of a citizen to appeal to the courts; or to usurp the judicial function in Ontario. We have a court system. We don't need to duplicate it in a commission which is made up of political appointees.

So I want to recommend that the passage of Bill 104 be delayed until such time as citizens have been given a fair opportunity to present their concerns; that Bill 104 be amended to restore due process of law; and that citizens impacted by Bill 104 be allowed their democratic right to counsel and appeal to the courts. I think if we look at aspects of the bill, it's fairly clear, at least to me, how seriously it impacts on those rights.

We are told in section 336, for example, that the commission may file an order in the Ontario Court (General Division) and it becomes enforceable as if it were a court order, and that under section 337(b) any member or any officer or any employee or any other person is subject to this. They would be required to give oath, for example. This commission can consider any matter referred to it, and it may follow any guideline.

I have concerns about those, and so I make the recommendations to you today that we slow this process down and we take another look at it. I would like to recommend that in fact the commission be abolished. I don't think that's very likely. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Wright. We have time for one minute per caucus. We'll start with the third party, Ms Boyd. We've said before this includes the answer as well.

Mrs Boyd: Sure. Thank you very much, Don, for coming. Basically you're saying it's not worth talking about all the details of this; you really want it slowed down so that people can take their time.

Mr Wright: I think it's worth talking about the details, but in fact that's not possible.

Mrs Boyd: I mean in this process.

Mr Wright: But for today I say, what more can a citizen ask for, except slow it down until we have a chance — yes, exactly that.

Mr Young: Mr Wright, can I ask you, who is the school system there for?

Mr Wright: The school system is there for the students and their parents and other citizens and employers and the owners of large corporations and persons who don't choose to go to school.

Mr Young: Our focus, as you know, is on children. You may have been teaching last time the school boards were reduced from over 1,400 school boards in Ontario

down to the current number, and I believe education was improved.

I don't know if you're aware of where the inside-the-classroom and outside-the-classroom definition originally came from, but it was the Sweeney report. He identified areas where we shouldn't look for savings, which were 53% inside the classroom, and areas which he said were at least partially outside the classroom, even if they supported the classroom, at 47%. He said that's where we should look for savings, and this bill is an attempt to put us in a position to do that. People think it's coming from this government; it came from a former government's appointee.

The Chair: Your question?

Mr Young: We had a chair of a public board in here this morning who said that 70% of parents approved, were satisfied with the education system. When I was a student that was C. They tell me it's a B now. Do you think that's a satisfactory mark for the school system?

Mr Wright: I think there is an amazing amount of data out there. I think that we pick and choose the data in terms of whether we approve or disapprove of the school system. I spent my professional life in the school system. I believe it is a good one. I spent a full year of my life looking at schools in New York state and in Pennsylvania and in Tennessee and in Florida. I want to say to you, sir, that I am proud to have served in the public school system in Ontario, and regardless of how you pick the data, if you spend time in our secondary schools or elementary schools I think you would agree with me they're doing a very good job.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Young, the parliamentary assistant, had indicated earlier today that there was an opportunity to consult on the Sweeney recommendations on school board amalgamation, and to a limited extent there was. But it's not the Sweeney recommendations that we have before us; it is a totally different set of proposals. I think we have to keep stating that, since the government, at least the parliamentary assistant, attempts to confuse the two.

It's also true that in 1968 — because I was one of the ones who was around, and other presenters today have said they did take the time to do it right then. There were cost impact studies, there were protections provided for employees and there was no need for an Education Improvement Commission. I share your concerns about the draconian powers, but even under the War Measures Act the response would have been temporary for the emergency that was defined at the time. This commission goes on for four years and it apparently is going to be overseeing and monitoring the electoral process in the year 2000. Do you find that as amazing and unprecedented as I do?

Mr Wright: I just can't fathom how a government would suggest such a body in a democracy when we don't have a state of insurrection at all. My experience with trustees and financial officers of school boards is that they might have a parking ticket that's overdue, but they may represent as good citizens as we have in this province. I can't believe a government would need to use these measures to bring about change among them. They may be the most reasonable people we have.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Wright. We do appreciate you being with us this afternoon and presenting your views.

May I call upon Peter Bogema. Is Mr Bogema here?

Mr Froese: He didn't come.

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF
HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS,
REGION G

The Chair: The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, region G, Alison Buffett and Sandy Mattis. Welcome. Thank you very much for being here.

Interjection: Peter Bogema —

The Chair: We just called his name and he didn't answer, so we've moved on to the next one. But thank you for your solicitousness, making sure that the Chair is on the ball.

You have 15 minutes for your presentation. You may use the time as you wish.

Mrs Alison Buffett: Hello, I'm Alison Buffett and this is Sandy Mattis. We're co-chairs of region G, which is part of the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations. We represent approximately 2,000 members in region G of the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, which is informally called Home and School. We're delighted to be able to be here today to respond to Bill 104. We've both taken time off work to be here because we think it's really important, so it's nice to be invited. We acknowledge and recognize that often parents are not able to attend hearings, not only because of commitments and family and work but because they do not feel intimately involved enough to respond. The ideas expressed here are representative of some of the region G members' concerns, while also reflecting the OFHSA policy.

The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations is the only provincially organized parent group in the Ontario public school system and includes over 20,000 members across Ontario. For the past 80 years, members of OFHSA have supported public education in Ontario and are proud that it is recognized as one of the best systems in the world.

OFHSA is a province-wide network of dedicated members who are committed to informed and proactive involvement in our homes, schools and communities to obtain the best for each student.

We'd like to congratulate each one of you who is here. Obviously, by your presence we know too that you're interested in working towards the best for each student in Ontario. We believe that each of you knows that parent involvement in education leads to higher grades and test scores, greater long-term academic achievement with fewer school dropouts, more positive attitudes and behaviour, more successful programs and more effective schools. Effective schools are defined as schools in which all children achieve, regardless of their social and economic factors. We believe public schools in Ontario provide equal opportunity for all children.

1700

Mrs Sandy Mattis: Equity in education across Ontario has been stated as one of the reasons for the announced

changes. Members of region G have expressed concern that Bill 104 may lead to ghetto schools. They want to know how the disparity between boards in the areas of finance, program and contractual agreements will be addressed. They are concerned that the planned changes to the funding process may result in school communities needing to fund-raise in order to maintain programming. An example is the Hamilton and Wentworth scenario. The Hamilton board offers French immersion and junior kindergarten, while Wentworth does not. Wentworth, however, has been able to maintain family studies and design technology in the grade 7 and 8 level and Hamilton has not. Who will decide which programs will continue to be funded, and where?

With the massive size of district school boards, it must be recognized that needs vary within their borders. Some schools will have informed, active supporters who will work towards getting the programs they want for their students while other communities will have many barriers to that same kind of support.

Public schools must continue to provide equal opportunities for all children. We must stand united in support of public education and teach our children creative problem-solving if they are not getting what they need in the public school system. We must not fall into the trap of passing off our parenting responsibilities and paying another system to educate our children. It becomes a vicious cycle when we allow students to begin to leave the public school system instead of working towards improving it.

Administrators, teachers, custodians and secretaries work together as dedicated and committed staff in Ontario schools. Parents have expressed concern that large numbers of staff will be moved around with the advent of district school boards. They are concerned about how this will erode the safe and comfortable learning environment our children enjoy. Please consider the impact this will have on children in the schools during any transition to district school boards.

Also, with the massive size of district boards, is there a limit to how far our children will be bused to alleviate overcrowding in one community and school closures in another?

OFHSA supports the policy that there be one publicly funded school system in Ontario. It is interesting to note that 33 public district boards will serve 1.5 million students and 33 separate district school boards will serve only 500,000 students. Seventy per cent of ratepayers in Ontario support the public system. This does not appear to show an improvement in equity.

Mrs Buffett: Improving the accountability of our educational system has also been the intent of Bill 104. Members of region G have expressed grave concerns that Bill 104 will actually result in less accountability. It is the policy of OFHSA that locally elected school boards remain a necessary part of the education structure.

OFHSA policy supports locally elected boards of education who are accountable and accessible to their ratepayers and are aware of the concerns and needs of their community. It is recognized that remuneration to trustees varies greatly throughout the province. However, the majority of dedicated trustees work long hours for

little pay. Members of school councils in their advisory capacity are not accountable to the community at large, only to the school in which they serve. Decision-making further from the community it impacts leads to less accountability.

Already, less accountability on the part of our trustees has occurred during discussion regarding municipal restructuring. Since school boards command the larger percentage of municipal taxes presently, not only should trustees have been invited to participate in the process, they should have been obligated to in order to represent their constituents.

Although the changes in education funding are not addressed in Bill 104, it is difficult to separate funding from accountability. Reform in education finance, programming and governance cannot each be done in isolation. Who will be accountable for the dollars spent in education? Will it be our MPP whom we call when we have concerns at our local school? What if our MPP is not a member of the governing party?

Accountability in education occurs when people feel responsibility for what takes place within their school system. We need to get as many people as possible involved in different ways to ensure that our public school system continues to be the great equalizer it has been. While on the surface it seems that the legislation of school councils is an attempt to do so, members of OFHSA have concerns that school councils have in fact limited involvement.

PPM 122 states that school councils should not replace existing parent groups. However, boards of education have begun passing policy which restricts to members of school councils the input they request. This fragments involvement and will lead to the limited number of school council members having far too much to do. Members of OFHSA who are representative and accountable to a democratic organization must also have the opportunity to be heard.

In order to improve accountability, we recommend that OFHSA be involved in the proposed legislation regarding school councils and that a member appointed by OFHSA be part of the Education Improvement Commission if it comes to pass. Our members' concerns regarding the commission are: Whom are they accountable to? Who will appoint members? How many committees will be formed and at what cost?

Mrs Mattis: It is important to recognize that OFHSA members have taken ownership and responsibility for their network and financially support schools. Mandated school councils have taken dollars from local board and school budgets.

In order to reap the benefits of parental involvement in education that we mentioned earlier, all parents must be encouraged to be partners in education. Five different roles have been identified as roles for parents: communicators, supporters, learners, teachers and decision-makers. The first four roles listed here identify the greatest role for parents, which is having a home where learning is valued, a home where parents are interested in homework and school activities. These are the roles that have the greatest impact on student achievement and attitudes. Any attempted reform of our education system should not be

based on the dollar alone but have significant focus towards improved student achievement.

Each family situation is unique, with the level of skills and understanding of how parents can help their children being unique as well. Parents helping parents because they come from the same viewpoint is what Home and School is all about.

With limited parental involvement and limited resources both on the school side and the home side, we need to make the connections quicker, save time, energy and money and limit the level of frustration by sharing information, ideas and responsibilities. This is Home and School: an organized community group that communicates with others in its school community, at board level, provincially and nationally.

There are concerns among OFHSA members that some school councils have set up constitutions to suit individual councils that are self-serving and with no accountability. To be effective contributors to the education process, school councils will need members who are informed about education issues and the realities of today's educational, community and business environment. With declining resources, schools should not be expected to provide this professional development for parents.

We have the knowledge, structure and resources in place. We have over 80 years of experience with parents in Ontario. Through our provincial network we organize and participate in workshops, meetings, seminars, training sessions and an annual conference. We believe that mandating parental involvement will not guarantee parent commitment or participation.

We share with you an excerpt from the constitution of OFHSA written in 1933, when OFHSA was incorporated. It is one of the purposes and objectives for which our federation was formed: "To support boards of school trustees and the Ministry of Education in progressive measures and to help make public opinion favourable to reform and advancement."

It is interesting that at the time the above statement was written, there was no question that supporting trustees and the ministry went hand in hand. We urge you to recognize the potential of a team approach. We invite you to have the courage to renew the spirit of cooperation among all the stakeholders in public education. Only then will the suggested changes be the best for each student in Ontario, and not just another cycle of reform.

As you continue on your journey of trying to balance the demands of ratepayers with the needs of students, may we leave you with an anonymous quote: "Education will never become as expensive as ignorance."

1710

Mr Young: Thank you very much for your presentation. I haven't sat in on every day of the committee hearings, but the days that I have sat and from the reading I've done on it — for instance, we heard from the chair of the Perth board of education this morning that there would be so many challenges around making these changes, it made it sound like that was the justification for the status quo. Of course, we can't keep doing things the same way we have in the past. We want to establish benchmarks and look to improve education. No board has

come before the committee and said: "We could have been more efficient. We're probably spending too much." In fact, they've said the opposite: "We are the most economic board in the province." They all say that. Logic would dictate that they can't all be the most economic. Would you care to comment on that?

Mrs Mattis: I live in Dundas, so my board is the Wentworth board. I think they really have been a hallmark for being a board that has been fiscally responsible. Those boards really should be recognized for that. I think they can be separated out, boards that have not and boards that have been, and I would like to see them be recognized. I think you hear from the tone of our response that we are acknowledging that changes are going to be taking place and that we must work together to make those changes, as we said, not just another cycle of reform but working together.

Mr Duncan: I just want to point out that a number of school board delegations have indicated that there's always room for improvement and they're prepared to do that over time, while they've outlined changes they've made already.

In any event, I was fascinated by the five points you made about parental involvement and the five roles parents take. I guess you would not concur with the gentleman who spoke earlier that a parent's involvement in learning isn't important; that parents should in fact be involved very actively in teaching at home and reading to kids at night. Those are the kinds of things that are really going to make our education system better.

Mrs Mattis: Absolutely. That is one of the biggest barriers in public education: to be able to reach out to those parents who don't have the time, the power, the structure and the family support behind them to come and make a presentation like that.

Mr Wildman: I really enjoyed your presentation. Your last paragraph really sums up the whole thing, where you talk about your constitution and that at one time it was assumed that cooperation between trustees and the ministry was the way it was going to be.

Don't you think one of the problems we have right now is that we have a government and a minister who have been criticizing the very people who would have to implement their reforms, the trustees, the school administrators and the teachers, and have been indicating that they aren't doing a good job and won't do a good job? Isn't that just a recipe for disaster? If the very people who have to implement the reforms are demoralized and angry, they're not going to do a very good job at implementing the reforms, are they?

Mrs Buffett: I agree.

Mrs Mattis: Absolutely. I feel like we were cheerleaders on the side here saying, "Let's get this act together, and let's work together with this stuff," because in the end what matters is the kids in our schools, all our kids, and the benefit of society.

The Chair: Mrs Buffett and Mrs Mattis, I want to thank you very much for taking the time to be with us this afternoon and making your presentation to the committee.

The separate school trustees, ward 3, Hamilton-Wentworth, Paula Randazzo. Not here?

TAXPAYERS COALITION NIAGARA

The Chair: Is Ian Fielding here? Mr Fielding, welcome to our committee. We're very happy to have you here. We look forward to your presentation. I notice you have a co-presenter; I hope you'll introduce him for the record. You may begin.

Mr Ian Fielding: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to present Mr Charlie Atkinson, who is the president of the Niagara Taxpayers of Niagara Falls.

This is a bit of a novelty for the taxpayers. As I say here, usually the only recognition we receive is to pay up, keep quiet and do what we're told.

As responsible citizens and in many cases knowledgeable business people, we find the attitude on the part of education boards and miscellaneous pressure groups to be most frustrating. We have endured many spending cuts in our private lives to cope with reduced income, and yet we find that school boards have continued to spend. It has almost been a case of, "Let's ride this one out, and then it's back to business as usual," and that has been very much the case at our local board.

First of all we applaud the efforts of the government to reduce education costs. We recognize the far-reaching effects this will have on costs across the province. However, we insist that the total effect of all changes proposed by the government will be, at worst, revenue-neutral. Preferably, we hope for some measure of tax relief.

Regarding the education system itself, we think there is a dire need to revamp the system, as you see from some of the data we have that was produced in the report *Social Security in Canada*, published by Human Resources Development Canada. I quote from page 38: "Canada has one of the highest levels of public spending on education as a percentage of GDP among the OECD countries." Its spending is second only to Norway. "At a time when jobs that pay well require higher skills levels," and this is again from their figures, "almost 3 million Canadians have very limited reading skills, while another 4 million have some difficulty with everyday reading tasks." That means 7 million people, or 23% of the Canadian population, are functionally illiterate, while we have the second-highest education expenditure of all OECD countries.

According to the Economic Council of Canada, if the present results continue in our school system, it will produce over one million new functionally illiterate people in the next 10 years. That's quite a frightening statistic.

The question we would like to ask the education people is: What have you been doing with all the money? Why are you so incompetent in managing this vast amount of money?

In 1991, education spending in Canada was \$36.6 billion, an increase of 436% since 1961, or an average annual increase of 14.5%. Ontario government data show that annual increases since 1991 have been in the range of 5% to 10% with possible further decreases in educational attainment. This is an atrocious record and a national disgrace. It is incredible that the entrenched

educators, who are supposed to be among our most intelligent people, are putting up so much resistance to the current attempt by the Ontario government to correct this appalling situation.

Being a very interested taxpayer and coming from a production-business background, I've taken the time to attend virtually all of the finance meetings of our local school board. I can state with some authority that the proposals of Bill 104 are a step in the right direction towards an efficient, accountable education system. However, Bill 104 stops short in a number of instances, which I will try to illustrate.

First, the need for improvement in the education system is a given and should not be very difficult to accomplish.

Second, there is already plenty of money in the system, but it is being grossly mismanaged.

1720

Based upon these two statements of fact derived from the report cited above, I wish to comment on the Bill 104 proposals as follows:

To cut the number of school boards, we agree.

To cut the number of trustees, we agree.

To cap honoraria at \$5,000 per annum is fine.

To create school advisory panels, yes.

Regulations concerning the eligibility of trustees must also be modified to remove those with an inherent conflict of interest. This would remove eligibility from teachers, ex-teachers, other board employees or ex-employees and the immediate family members of those groups. In our school board we find that when it comes time for voting, 75% would have conflicts of interest if they would declare them.

Further, the school advisory panels must have proper representation from taxpayers. Representation from teachers, ex-teachers, board employees, ex-board employees and all others with a strong conflict of interest regarding school management must be severely limited to a minority, at most, or eliminated completely. Presumably the school advisory panel will meet with school board representatives and there is therefore no need for such representation on the panel itself.

Moreover, the same conflict-of-interest laws and regulations which apply to municipalities must be enforced for the advisory panels. This is something we've run into time and time again, that the conflict-of-interest laws are just ignored.

Further, no individual school board should be allowed to negotiate with any employee union, because experience has shown that boards tend to be fumbling amateurs in this respect. The present system pits amateur, well-intentioned, half-hearted board negotiators against the province's shrewdest and most powerful union negotiators, with the predictable result that unions, and consequently board management and administrators, have gained salaries, benefits and work conditions which are far superior to those experienced by the working taxpayers who are funding these privileged educators. We would like to see that the unions are met with at the provincial level and negotiations carried out provincially, because we feel it's not a good idea to do it board by board.

I'd just like to make the following additional points.

Total educational spending must be curbed and school boards constrained to prevent the building of extravagant empires and edifices which are an insult to the taxpayer.

There is an unnecessary proliferation of courses available to students. These have been introduced over the years with little thought to cost during the period of lavish funding to all activities labelled as education. The bewildering variety of courses now available include many that are sparsely attended and can be deemed to be superfluous. These courses divert students and resources from the core educational needs. All school programs must be examined in detail to cut out such unnecessary courses.

Outside agencies must be brought in to clear out the present incompetent management and install efficient, accountable systems. We have unearthed one situation in our area where the students going to one school are costing the taxpayer approximately five times what it is at a neighbouring high school. This is just an example of the way the management is getting out of hand.

The present education system allows boards to operate without effective management information systems and cost control mechanisms. The educational system and the school boards must be restructured and simplified. It is essential to build in modern management systems which quantify and segregate costs to be the basis for an efficient, responsible and accountable education system.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Fielding, to you and your colleague for coming in today. You've used up all of your time, right down to the wire. We appreciate your coming.

I call upon the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, Brant, Cheryl Hasler.

Mr Duncan: May I ask a question for legislative research?

The Chair: Mr Duncan.

Mr Duncan: I'd like to ask legislative research if they could provide to us or get for us a copy of the 1994 document Social Security in Canada so that we may peruse the statistics that are quoted in this presentation tomorrow.

Mr Glenn: When did you want that by?

Mr Duncan: If we could get it from the library tomorrow. I believe it's there.

Mr Glenn: For 1 o'clock tomorrow at the hearings.

Mr Wildman: I would like to request that the ministry assist this group that is having to deal with such a horrendous situation in the school system and give them the information of how they can take advantage of the conflict-of-interest act. If there is indeed a situation where there's a school board that has 75% of its members in conflict, they should be taken to the courts.

Mr Young: I'll take it under advisement.

Mr Wildman: Thank you.

ONTARIO ENGLISH CATHOLIC
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION,
BRANT UNIT

The Chair: Welcome, President Hasler. We're looking forward to your presentation.

Ms Cheryl Hasler: Thank you very much. The Brant unit of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association appreciates having been afforded the opportunity to address the many concerns we have with the Fewer School Boards Act. All of us know only too well that Bill 104 is but one piece of a larger plan the Harris government has devised for publicly funded education in Ontario. Part one of that plan was to create a crisis in education. Though we may not like it, few of us in this room can disagree that that goal has been achieved.

This destabilization has been accomplished by continually criticizing local school boards, teachers and administrators; eliminating programs and services; slashing the province's financial support of education to levels not seen since 1990; and introducing radical changes at a rate that makes effective implementation of them impossible. This government has succeeded in undermining the public's confidence in an education system that the Premier is only too happy to boast about when he is outside the country. With this manufactured "crisis" now in place, the government has laid the foundation which it is hoping will permit the remainder of its education plan to unfold without resistance.

The government has been challenged on numerous occasions to reveal its real agenda for education so that the plan can be studied and evaluated in its entirety. The fact that it refuses to do so causes us grave concern about where its next reforms are going to lead us. The piecemeal approach to educational reform that has been adopted by the Conservatives is one which leads us to conclude that the government recognizes that its real plan would never be accepted by the public if it were to be fully disclosed. We believe it's a plan that will result in further funding cuts, increased privatization of services, reduced opportunities for students, vouchers, charter schools, and ultimately in the decimation of our publicly funded system of education.

The government's refusal to reveal its whole plan is especially disconcerting in light of Bill 104 and the establishment of the EIC. This is the first piece of legislation that the Conservatives have introduced which addresses educational governance and it effectively ends local representation by usurping powers that have been held by local school boards and trustees for more than 150 years. Is it any wonder, then, that it has led to such fear about what might be coming next?

The fact that this appointed body has been given such arbitrary powers is even more alarming after learning that section 344 states: "The decisions of the Education Improvement Commission are final and shall not be reviewed or questioned by a court." The commission will be able to act with impunity and without fear of reprisal from an electorate. It will be in no way accountable to the public and it will be completely inaccessible to those in the communities where its decisions are going to have an impact. It's inappropriate that the EIC be given powers which would allow it to override provisions of collective agreements that were negotiated in good faith under Bill 100.

Although the details have not yet been provided, the Minister of Education has announced that the province will assume the full cost of education in exchange for

offloading many social, health and related program costs to municipalities. The funding partnership for education between the province and local school boards that has existed in Ontario since the 1840s will end with the passage of Bill 104. When the province assumes the responsibility for entirely funding education, the change will result in a loss of local control and the end of local governance structures in education.

By removing all control of board finances from elected trustees and by arming the Education Improvement Commission with all of the most important and critical powers that boards once held, the government has ensured that district school boards will be prevented from acting as effective decision-making bodies. By the year 2001, public confidence in these once vital community institutions will have been so badly eroded that legislation which will eliminate any form of locally elected school boards will be almost unnecessary.

1730

The restrictions that Bill 104 places on candidates will only serve to prevent those members of the community who might actually have some real understanding about what goes on in schools and who might wish to become involved as trustees from running for such office.

The minister has stated that he intends to cut educational spending by a further, apparently, \$1.5 billion. By taking over education funding, redefining classroom costs, and by effectively removing all power from local school boards, he will be able to impose the next round of cuts almost at will. There will be no avenue of appeal and trustees will no longer have the ability to raise additional funds locally in order to protect their students from the arbitrary decisions of the provincial government.

It's when examining the impact of Bill 104 on the right of Roman Catholics in Ontario to have a publicly funded separate denominational school system that Catholic teachers become extremely worried. Section 93 of the Constitution act guarantees Roman Catholic Ontarians the right to a separate school system and Bill 104 clearly violates that right. The extent and the nature of the powers that the EIC has been given under this piece of legislation and the inability of local boards to levy education taxes in the future may well mean the end of publicly funded Roman Catholic education in this province.

In their rush to welcome with open arms the yet-to-be-defined government pledge of equal funding, separate school trustees may have underestimated the real cost of that promise. Bringing larger, better-funded school boards down to the desperately low levels of assessment-poor ones has never been the goal of Catholic educators.

With the passage of Bill 104, the right of local Catholic ratepayers to elect representative Roman Catholic trustees to manage and control the separate school system will come to an end. If the separate school system is to continue to exist, it must be controlled by and be responsive to the wishes of the local denominational minority which it is there to serve.

The Constitution guarantees that provincial legislation relating to education must not jeopardize the right to denominational education for the Roman Catholic minority. But there can be no doubt that the denominational

rights of that minority will be infringed upon by a commission whose members are not accountable to or elected by separate school supporters.

In the government's haste to turn more power over to school councils, it has forgotten to consult with the very people that it proposes to saddle with the additional work and responsibilities. We've heard today repeatedly from parents who have told us that. Bill 104 directs the EIC to make recommendations about strengthening the role of councils and increasing parental involvement in educational governance. At this point, it remains unclear how the councils will be composed. Will there be minimum qualifications that must be met in order to serve? Who will be eligible to sit on them? Will the representatives be elected?

In many schools it has been next to impossible to find parents who are able to make the commitment necessary to sit on the school councils of today. When the powers and role of the councils are enhanced, it is presumed that the level of responsibility and time commitment will be even greater. Who will take on this role of school council representative then?

Contrary to what the government would have us believe, most parents do not want to manage the school system. They have neither the time nor the resources to do so. They cannot adequately replace democratically elected and accountable trustees, nor do most of them want to. Parents should, however, continue to have a real voice in determining how our schools function. Bill 104 and its move to strengthen the role of school councils appears to lend credence to the widely held belief that the government is moving ever closer to introducing charter schools.

Granting the EIC the power to transfer existing board staff and the power to assign teachers to specific positions is in direct contravention of collective agreement provisions related to staffing, which have been bargained in good faith under Bill 100. It's important that the EIC, in exercising its powers, not interfere in any way with the rights that are presently covered by the collective agreements or that are conferred on teachers and school boards by virtue of the School Boards and Teachers Collective Negotiations Act.

The move by the government to openly promote outsourcing of non-instructional school services is one that carries with it two significant areas of concern for OECSA and its members. Librarians, guidance counselors, special education and music teachers are all teachers, and every one of them is critical to the success of our students. The constant threat by this government to eliminate these valuable program specialists and replace them with non-teachers is demoralizing and discouraging to all members of our school communities.

Equally disturbing is the expressed view of the government that education dollars can be saved through the outsourcing of the work presently being done by non-teaching personnel. Carrying out educational restructuring on the backs of educational workers in order to fund a tax cut which will benefit well-off Ontarians is unconscionable. Such an approach flies in the face of the gospel values and the principles of social justice which our separate schools purport to instill in our students.

Custodial, clerical and education assistants who perform their duties are valuable members of our school communities and any move to eliminate their jobs or to reduce their wages and working conditions will be vehemently opposed by OECSA.

When existing local school boards are amalgamated to form the much larger district ones as proposed in Bill 104, many difficulties will become apparent. The very size and nature of the new boards will hinder their ability to respond to the concerns of the local citizens whose children are serviced by the new entities. Until an adequate period of time and an appropriate opportunity for public consultation about the boundaries of new district school boards have been provided, the amalgamation process should be put on hold. Once again, the Conservatives are moving ahead too quickly with massive reforms and restructuring which will have significant implications for our education system. We plead with the government to slow down and to provide more opportunity for public consultation. The overwhelming number of people and organizations who were denied the chance to make presentations to this committee speaks volumes about the level of concern that exists about Bill 104.

With the proposed amalgamation of the Brant and the Haldimand-Norfolk separate boards, the government has combined two small have-nots to create one big have-not. Neither of our boards are presently able to provide many of the programs and services that are offered elsewhere in the province. We seriously question how the creation of a new board will in any way improve the quality of education that we're able to deliver to our students.

Its decision to mandate the amalgamation of these two boards causes us to wonder if the ministry has made the effort to examine the record of the Brant separate board in terms of its administrative costs and its efforts to control spending. There is a long-standing history of cooperation and shared services between the coterminous school boards of Brant county which results in significant annual savings to both boards, and I've included that for your reference.

What credit does our existing board get then for having been so frugal and fiscally responsible? We find that we'll be amalgamated with another poor board. The restructuring will mean reduced accessibility to those actually making decisions about the education of the children in Brant county. The real power will rest with the cabinet-appointed EIC, not with the democratically elected trustees who are entrusted with the stewardship of the Roman Catholic system of Brant county.

Several studies have proven that amalgamations will actually increase the costs of education in Ontario. Even the minister's own very generous estimates project a savings of perhaps \$150 million as a result of amalgamation, hardly sufficient to warrant the massive overhaul of education that Bill 104 is going to cause.

Local autonomy and democratic accountability have always been the cornerstones of educational governance in Ontario, but for the next four years our school boards will have little autonomy to govern the school system. When the Fewer School Boards Act is passed, non-elected government appointees are going to take control

of our school boards and consequently of education in this province.

The bill creates district school boards which are prevented from being effective and, as a result, public confidence in these institutions will be eroded. It's our expectation that school boards will become the vehicles which allow the government to implement its policy decisions and that the bill begins the process of eliminating locally elected and accountable school boards altogether.

Finally, when one carefully examines Bill 104, they are left with many questions. How is our publicly funded education system going to be improved by the centralization of power that will result when it comes into effect? How is this going to benefit our students? Improving their educational opportunities should be the only reason to even consider implementing changes of the magnitude contemplated by this bill. There is no proof that there will be any significant benefit to taxpayers as a result of the bill. However, the erosion of the powers of the democratically elected trustees which Bill 104 seems to ensure will make it quite easy for the minister to arbitrarily cut spending on education in the future. By that time, there will be no elected representatives with the power or the credibility to stop him.

I've appended to the back a list of recommendations which I'm sure you're familiar with. Thank you for your time.

Ms McLeod: Thank you for a very thorough presentation. I share some of your concerns about the long-term consequences of this. One of the more immediate possibilities is that the responsibility for managing school maintenance, construction and busing would be transferred to the municipalities. Maybe you'd just comment on what that means to a Catholic school community.

Ms Hasler: In every aspect of our system we try to bring the catholicity forward and it's an integral part of what makes our system work. When that's downloaded on to the municipalities or if we're looking at the outsourcing, we have no guarantee that the people who are there now, who are performing those roles, who are part of the community and who hold the same values we do are going to be the same people there in the future.

Mrs Boyd: I must say, this is a very well presented brief and very succinct. Thank you for doing that. I share your concerns. If people accuse you once in a while of having a paranoid fantasy about what the end result is going to be, please be assured that everyone doesn't believe it's a paranoid fantasy. We think indeed you are right on the money, and thank you for doing so in such an eloquent way.

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Mr Pettit: Thank you for your presentation. Is it the belief of your association that the constitutional taxing rights of the Catholic school system will be extinguished under this bill?

Ms Hasler: I believe it's our understanding that it's sort of put in abeyance for now, but certainly our fear is that anything that's not used will not be there in the future when it's needed.

Mr Pettit: We heard that yesterday in Windsor, and I read from a letter from Patrick Slack, who is the executive director of your association, who said —

Ms Hasler: Sorry, no, he's not with us. I'm a Catholic teacher; he has a very different point of view.

Mr Pettit: I should say the OSSTA. He said that it's not true and also that they're convinced there will be equitable funding for the education of the Catholic children without the loss of any constitutionally protected rights.

Mr Wildman: It is a system based on faith.

Ms Hasler: Perhaps I should direct you, although I don't have it with me, to a letter from the president of our association, who very much takes issue with that position.

Mr Pettit: I just wanted to point out the opposing views of what I would consider to be two relatively close associations.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We appreciate your being here, President Hasler, and making your presentation.

Mr Duncan: I have a question for the government. Mr Young wouldn't be aware of this. Yesterday I placed a motion asking the government to refer this bill to the Ontario Court of Appeal. The motion was defeated. The reason I did that was because of the nature of disagreements about the constitutional provisions of the bill. I would ask, if the ministry has a legal position with respect to these issues that have been raised, would they be prepared to table it?

Mr Young: I will endeavour to get you an answer.

LONDON WOMEN TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

The Chair: Could I ask for the London Women Teachers' Association, please, Ingrid Clark and Barbara Cole. Thank you very much for being here. We very much look forward to your views.

Mrs Ingrid Clark: It's a privilege to be here. I'm Ingrid Clark and this is Barb Cole, and we're going to do a tag-team presentation, where I'll speak and then she'll speak.

My colleague and I would like to thank you for this opportunity to speak to your committee as classroom teachers, first, and as members of the London Women Teachers' Association, second. I teach a grade 7 class, with all its complexities. My partner teaches English as a second language to children in three different schools. As professionals, neither of us is a stranger to change. In the last 30 years I have been asked to teach reading from the Ontario grey book of curriculum, if you can go back that far; used the nine square reading plan; hand-prompt with the distar method of reading; used language experience that required entire forests of paper for charts and, finally, mastery learning, which was very exciting. Now we have entered the whole language and Common Curriculum phase. There has been old math, new math and also a myriad of different kinds of reporting systems.

Seldom were teachers consulted, but rather told to throw out the old and bring in the new. We are often left to be the ones who are accountable and criticized. Teachers welcome change if it is for the better and it can be historically proven as beneficial for all. That is why we are here to speak to you about our deep concerns with Bill 104 in its present form.

I have to put my glasses on because the print gets smaller.

The Chair: You're quite right. I've noticed that myself.

Mrs Clark: There is tremendous anxiety and uncertainty in our classrooms about the future of our schools. What happens as Bill 104 and the related issues unfold will have a profound effect on the lives of the children and adults who learn and on those who teach in our schools. The bundle of announcements from the week of January 13, 1997, will affect school programs, finance, staffing, administration and basic operations. The powers and accountability of the local decision-makers are yet to be determined.

What has been determined is this government's intention to continue with its 30% income tax cut. One has to ask if there is a direct link between this intention and the province assuming full responsibility for education funding. We also have to ask this question in light of the minister's public statements about cutting an additional \$1 billion from elementary and secondary education.

Part of the finance reform package the minister has proposed will be a transfer of financial responsibility to the municipalities of certain functions, welfare etc, in return for which the province would finance education from a combination of business and commercial taxes and direct grants. In justification he indicates the fact that school boards have increased the amount they require from residential tax by approximately 50% over the past 10 years. He naturally fails to point out that the major drain on residential property can be attributed to normal cost increases over the 10-year period. The CPI rose 35.6% over the same period and there was a large reduction in the level of funding provided by the provincial government.

Total control seems to be the basic, underlying agenda of the exercise. It will be achieved by this move. Without the ability to tax, school boards will become mere ciphers for the provincial government. School boards will be unable to develop programs to meet local needs as identified by parents, unable to negotiate with their employees effectively, unable to respond to community needs, unable to address educational needs identified in the local area which may be unique and not reflected in the educational funding formula. Now I'll turn it over to Barbara.

Mrs Barbara Cole: The Minister of Education and Training has stated on numerous occasions that we need to cut costs in order to improve our education system. While there is no logic to this statement, he has also overstated the costs of the system and redefined the classroom to exclude many essential aspects of education. This bill must be seen in this context of confusion, misleading statements and a government intent on cutting costs of many important services in order to provide a tax cut that will only benefit a very few well-off people. Providing a high-quality, democratic, accessible education system for a diverse and large population requires the investment of money and resources. You can't deny that.

No proof has ever been offered that amalgamating school boards will save money; none was provided during the time that the Ontario School Board Reduction Task

Force was working and none has been provided since. Indeed there is much evidence to the contrary. The Minister of Education and Training has alluded to overspending by the Ontario education system. The evidence is lacking in detail and accuracy. Despite this, the minister maintains that reducing the number of school boards by half will somehow magically free up enough money to improve our education system, yet he has made no guarantees that the current funding level will be maintained.

In education we find ourselves fighting various myths. A currently popular one is that education cuts outside the classroom do not hurt students' education. In January 1997 the Minister of Education and Training released a document on spending in Ontario schools. Expenditures are divided into three categories: direct classroom, classroom support and instructional supervision and in-school administration. In talking with the media about this document, the minister stated that for every dollar spent in the classroom, 80 cents is spent outside the classroom. The implication is that cuts can be made outside the classroom without affecting the education that our children are receiving.

The reality shows a different picture. The education system is an integrated whole. A cut in one area directly affects other areas. For example, research has shown that music education improves children's ability in reading and mathematics.

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As every teacher knows, a classroom does not stand alone. Library, guidance, preparation time, psychologists, principals, vice-principals, consultants, lunch-room supervisors, art, music, support and custodial staff and transportation are all vital features of our education system. They all support and enhance the education of children of this province.

Library programs have been cut in a large number of school boards. Some of these cuts have been to staff, some have been to resources. These cuts, coupled with cuts to municipal library programs, will mean there are fewer opportunities for children, especially from disadvantaged homes, to use books. Will this affect literacy? We know that the best way to ensure a literate, knowledgeable populace is to have children fall in love with books early in their life.

The cuts this government has already made are jeopardizing all of our children's chances. Cuts to such things as field trips and extracurricular sports activities cannot be dismissed as having little effect on our students' education. These are the programs and activities that give life and spirit to the curriculum, giving children the self-confidence they need to pursue learning. Without adequate school resources, many home and school associations are dividing their energies between fundraising for these programs and trying to pick up the slack for some basic supplies, including textbooks. This means that schools in more affluent neighbourhoods will be better able to provide their children with an adequate and rich education. They'll be better able to do that than schools in poorer neighbourhoods, and this flies in the face of the minister's stated goal of providing equity.

Mrs Clark: In listening this afternoon, I found that the same points were being made by many of the presenters, so obviously they are very important to the hundreds and, in our case, thousands of people who are going to be affected by Bill 104. The Lieutenant Governor in Council, or the cabinet, is given very sweeping powers. This means the decisions can be done behind closed doors, with no provision for discussion or input by those affected. Could the Lieutenant Governor in Council impose collective agreements as part of a transitional matter considered advisable? Is there nothing to suggest that this is something we need not worry about?

This government has not given us any reason to suspect that it intends to honour the current collective agreements or the collective bargaining process. The teachers of this province have been living with rumours for over a year and a half that they will lose their preparation time and retirement gratuities, or indeed their right to strike. We are of course absolutely opposed to such changes, but they must not come in the form of regulations billed as a transition matter. That is very undemocratic.

In 1995 the federation, in its submission to the Ontario School Board Restructuring Task Force, enunciated a set of principles drawn from the Ontario experience of amalgamations and transfers of responsibility over the past 30 years. These principles are as follows:

- (1) That current teachers be guaranteed job protection;
- (2) That teachers be entitled to the form of contract to which they would have been entitled if there had been no school board reduction or amalgamation;
- (3) That there be full recognition of accrued seniority;
- (4) That there be full recognition of vested benefits — for example, sick leave credits and service and sick leave gratuities;
- (5) That there be full recognition regarding category placement and experience;
- (6) That previous collective agreements remain in place until a new agreement is negotiated;
- (7) That there be protection regarding maximum distance for involuntary transfer;
- (8) That any saving accruing from amalgamation be directed to improved learning conditions.

Those of us who will be affected will be part of a new board, the ELMO board, as we are nicknaming it, which I'm sure you've all heard of. It will become the third-largest board in Ontario. Those of us who will be in this new board or district are adamant that these principles be adhered to.

If teachers and other school employees are concerned for the future of their employment in the face of amalgamation, this will affect their performance in the classroom. The legislation introduced by a former Progressive Conservative government in 1968 to manage the process of amalgamation to the present configuration of school boards clearly stated that all contracts, debts, agreements, liabilities and assets of the predecessor entities were transferred to the successors. It made clear as well that this transfer included the transfer of the employment contracts and rights of teachers. Bill 104 offers no such assurance.

The Chair: Excuse me. I'm not quite sure how long the brief is, but I'm wondering if I might ask you to sum up.

Mrs Cole: A reduction in the number of school boards undertaken by our government, perceived to be hostile to the very concepts of local control and shared decision-making in a framework essentially void of any basic principles other than fewer school boards, less money and outsourcing, sounds alarm bells throughout the community. Major transitions of governance and restructuring require an environment of mutual respect, confidence and trust in order to succeed in the face of many organizational and technical barriers.

In conclusion, we urge this committee to recommend that the government reconsider the massive reorganization of the school boards of Ontario. We urge this committee to recommend changes to this bill to clarify the issues we have raised. We urge this committee to recommend that the government deal with all of its proposals for education restructuring at one time instead of piecemeal, and we strongly urge this committee to recommend that the government slow its pace, that it slow down to allow full and complete consultation on all the issues. The government has stated that it is setting up a system that it expects to be in place for years to come. There's no need to rush into something that will not work and that will not improve the education opportunities for the children of our Ontario.

The Chair: Ms Clark, Ms Cole, I want to express the appreciation of the committee for your attending here today and sharing with us the views of your association.

Mrs Cole: Thank you for the opportunity.

MICHAEL BODNAR

The Chair: Michael Bodnar. Mr Bodnar, thanks very much for being here. We're looking forward to your views.

Mr Michael Bodnar: Madam Chair, members of the hearing committee, I speak to you today as a parent of two students attending separate schools in Brantford, Brant county. I speak to you also as a taxpayer. I'm not here as a member of a special interest group.

In 1996 approximately 40% of my city tax dollars went to cover education. Speaking for the Roman Catholic separate school board, approximately \$35 million is projected for the 1996 budget. Of that, 2% will be spent on administration and 1% will be spent on trustees' salaries, if that. Currently the taxpayer pays \$5,700 annually for each one of the 14 trustees on the separate school board.

What has the separate school board done for us lately? The separate elementary schools went through a seven-day strike in January of this year. In the end the teachers basically got what they asked for. To date these seven lost school days have yet to be made up. The taxpayer lost; the parents lost.

As a taxpayer I want improved accountability of trustees to parents and taxpayers. I want cost savings to be passed on to the classroom, not the boardroom. I want less bureaucracy, less salaries paid to trustees, and I also encourage a sharing of resources such as transportation,

payroll and other administrative costs. I also want strengthened advisory roles for parents on school councils. School councils should not be glorified PTAs. I support the Harris government in its efforts to reduce education costs through Bill 104.

One final note regarding trustees: I understand that through the present legislation recommendation, trustees' salaries will be now capped at \$5,000 annually. I would suggest that if trustees are so concerned about saving tax dollars, preserving educational quality, and dedication to public service, they should be willing to serve for a lot less, with reasonable expenses reimbursed. I serve on a city committee voluntarily. Surely trustees can learn to lower their expectations as well.

Thank you. Are there any questions?

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Mr Wildman: I have two things I'd like to raise coming from your comments. First, the total expenditure in Ontario on education per annum is about \$13.5 billion, according to the minister. Bill 104 will save, according to the minister, \$150 million because of the fewer number of trustees and cuts in their remuneration, which is a lot of money but it works out to a little more than 1%. I guess my question is, do you think this 1% will significantly assist in ensuring additional resources for the classroom?

The other question I have coming out of your comments is, if there is a disruption of services in a dispute between teachers and a board, do you think the time should have to be made up subsequently for the students? Because if that happens, the teachers would have to be paid for the time made up, would they not?

Mr Bodnar: You raise a very interesting question, Mr Wildman. Lost time through strikes does cost the private sector quite a bit. I know because I work for the private sector. It certainly does cost the public sector a bit too. I would encourage, if at all possible, for this time to be made up, yes. I'm not necessarily saying that there shouldn't be a compromise, but the time certainly should be made up.

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): Mr Bodnar, you indicated that you were a parent.

Mr Bodnar: Yes, I am a parent.

Mr Grimmett: Are your children in school now?

Mr Bodnar: I am a parent of a child in St Leo's school and I'm a parent of a child in St John's College.

Mr Grimmett: Do you have any comment on the suggestion in the legislation and also the comments of the minister that perhaps school councils take on more responsibility? Do you have any ideas around that?

Mr Bodnar: I am in favour certainly of giving school councils more teeth. I know as a parent and from talking to other parents that they are a little hesitant to get involved in school councils because they feel it's just a glorified PTA. I certainly would like to see the advisory role of parents strengthened and I certainly would like to see school councils have more teeth.

Mr Duncan: I think we all would agree that better use of resources under any circumstances is an agreeable objective. Do you think this bill will make for better decisions, or would you not be afraid of a bigger bureau-

cracy and more centralized control being counter-productive in terms of better use of education dollars?

Mr Bodnar: That all depends on what you mean by bureaucracy. Are you talking about the administrative staff or are you talking about the number of trustees?

Mr Duncan: We're talking about much larger school boards, both geographically and in terms of a centralized bureaucracy. I see bureaucrats running wild, no trustees, broken-up parent councils. I see this as a recipe for an absolutely wild education bureaucracy. I think we all agree we'd like to see more resources dedicated to the classroom, and we all want to see our resources used efficiently. I think the question becomes, does this achieve that, and if so, how do bigger school boards with an all-powerful group of five people in Toronto, likely none of whom will be from this immediate area — how does a bigger centralized bureaucracy provide for more efficient education?

Mr Bodnar: Let me respond in this way: Let's say you didn't reduce the number of trustees — and I'm going to speak only for Brant county, because that's my area of knowledge right now. I can't speak for Toronto. Let's say you kept the number of trustees but drastically reduced their salaries. You could basically have the same total cost for trustees, you could have the same number of trustees as you have now, and you could still save money.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Bodnar. We do appreciate your coming forward as an individual to share your views.

Mr Duncan: Could I ask a question? Could we have for tomorrow from the ministry, excluding Metropolitan Toronto, the average trustee's salary versus the average salary of a director of education in Ontario?

Mr Young: I'll get you whatever information we have on trustees' salaries.

Mr Duncan: And directors of education.

Mr Young: Whatever's available, because sometimes this information is not forthcoming.

Mr Duncan: It's all available under your confidential report.

The Chair: All right, and have that by tomorrow at 1.

BOB CLARK

The Chair: Can I call Bob Clark. Thank you very much for being here. You have 10 minutes for your presentation.

Mr Bob Clark: My name is Bob Clark and I'm a teacher-librarian at Laura Secord Secondary School in St Catharines, which is in the Lincoln County Board of Education. I also have a 12-year-old daughter in grade 7 at a public elementary school and a 14-year-old daughter in grade 9 at the public secondary school, so I speak both as a teacher and as a parent.

Bill 104 states that this is "An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards...." If the government were honest, Bill 104 would say "imposing" a reduction in the number of school boards. It also drastically reduces the numbers of trustees so that instead of being able to discuss the needs

of students with a locally and democratically elected person, real power and therefore unaccountability will rest with a few bureaucrats hidden behind walls in some grey government building at Queen's Park.

How is it reducing the number of school boards? By creating larger geographical units and perpetuating an extremely expensive system of four different types of school boards. Why not combine the public board, the Catholic board and the two French boards into one administrative board? Each entity would still elect its own trustees who would be solely responsible for the unique educational differences of its students, but all would come together to deal with common expenses such as supplies, transportation, school maintenance etc. Money would not be lost to increased costs of transportation and communication resulting from larger geographical units.

The funding of two major school systems introduced by William Davis in 1984 was one of the most costly mistakes the Conservatives ever made.

"Why destroy our roots and pride? I disagree with restructuring because it believes that bigger is better. Services always cost more in larger municipalities": Mike Harris's campaign speech, Fergus, Ontario, 1994. So why combine school boards into bigger units?

Bill 104 also has inaccuracies, such as referring to section 93 of the Constitution act, 1982. The Constitution act only has 60 sections. If it errs on something as simple as this, how can we trust its approach to the complex issues of education?

I entered teaching shortly after the introduction of the Hall-Dennis report in the 1960s. It forced a major change in education, introducing the student-centred classroom. Rote learning was replaced by thinking, and this aspect of it was good. But the Hall-Dennis report, like Bill 104, had a fatal flaw: It removed the teaching of grammar. It theorized that students could learn to write correctly by increasing their reading of literature. The teaching of grammar was eliminated by the Ministry of Education over the protests of teachers. Predictably, within five years the complaints about the falling level of writing skills began to increase. For the theory to work, students had to read more, more than could be provided in the classroom environment.

Teachers did not make these changes. School boards did not make these changes. If the system is broke, as Mr Snobelen says, it began with the Hall-Dennis report and it began with the provincial government. It began with ministers of education.

Throughout my teaching career, I have watched as teachers have been systematically left out of the shaping of education and then blamed for the results. If the school councils that are being set up had a long-term memory, they would most certainly work better. But they will not. When the student graduates, the school council loses the parent, his knowledge and his expertise.

The parental base for these councils has eroded. More students in the school system are from family breakups. Less parental support and guidance are being given. Parents of the students who are at risk of failure are the least likely to come to parent-teacher interviews. More and more students have part-time jobs, and sometimes those jobs are needed to put food on the table as a result

of cutbacks to social programs by this same government. Often those jobs mean that homework does not get done, assignments are missed or school is skipped altogether.

An act to improve accountability — to whom? Certainly not to the education of the student. Certainly not to the parents who do care and who do offer support and encouragement, because it will become increasingly difficult to talk with the few trustees who are left. Certainly not to the teachers who have struggled for years with so many politically motivated changes to education, changes that every Minister of Education felt he had to introduce to make a name for himself. Mr Snobelen is no different from virtually all the education ministers since William Davis who have preceded him.

1810

How does the Premier, Mr Harris, attempt to gain support for Bill 104? He does it with expensive ads that expose the shortcomings of a system that successive governments have created. Then Mr Harris insults all of the parents, the professionals, the citizens of this province who have served long hours, who have submitted to the democratic process and been elected as trustees and tried their best. These are the people on whom our Premier heaps verbal abuse. He was quoted by Southam News as saying that, "School boards have done their best to ruin Ontario's education system." "We think the decisions they have made over the last two years with a very, very minimal funding reduction have been abysmal, have been wrong, and we are not going to accept that."

Minimal funding reduction? The \$400 million the Tories cut from the education system in the last four months of 1996 will become only another \$600 million this year, since further cuts were put on hold. This is in addition to the \$525 million that is continuing to come out each and every year as a result of the social contract. That means local school boards will get over \$1.1 billion less per year than before the social contract. The cost of books and educational materials, the cost of the programs for the personal computers that Mr Snobelen is pushing and the escalating cost of servicing the computers that he mandated in the system and did not properly fund will place enormous pressure on boards' budgets, and combining school boards will not save a cent in these areas.

What has happened to the provincial share of the education bill? It has gone from 60% to around 30%. The whole reason Mr Snobelen gave for taking over education funding for Bill 104 was to get costs under control, but they are the direct result of the policies of the provincial government.

The Lincoln county board spent \$23 million less in the past year than it did in 1992 and has made exactly the cuts the provincial government suggested it do. Abysmal!

"We are not going to accept school boards increasing class size, we are not going to accept them compromising the classroom education, we are not going to accept compromising quality of education," said Harris." This statement, the desperate words of a snake oil salesman, completely discredits any reasons for justifying the very bill it tries to promote. Again, Harris is blaming the school boards for increasing class size, when the social contract mandated the boards had to cut staff by 4.75%. Either Mr Harris is being deliberately dishonest, or at the

very best he failed math throughout school. You can't take 5% of the teachers out of the classroom, as the previous government did, and not see class sizes increase. The whole basis given by this government for Bill 104 is a lie.

Mr Harris and Mr Snobelen have found it necessary to verbally abuse teachers and locally elected trustees publicly to justify a downloading of programs that will go up in cost so they can, through Bill 104, make cuts to education and lower theirs. They are resorting to despicable name-calling and childish finger-pointing to cover up the years of misdirection of education by the provincial politicians who have mandated the changes that have made education what it is today. If anyone deserves to be blamed for having done their best to ruin Ontario's education system, if anyone deserves to be blamed for an abysmal record, it is the various ministers of education of the provincial government. Mr Harris and Mr Snobelen are way off base for using tactics of hatred and mistrust of education workers to ram through their ill-conceived Bill 104.

Mr Snobelen, as education minister, wants to engineer the greatest overhaul in the history of public education, and Bill 104 offers us changes in structure but absolutely no figures on financial details. He says, "Trust me," while misleading the public and the Legislature by calling the trustees irresponsible for increasing residential taxes by an average of 5% in each of the last 10 years. Virtually all of that increase can be attributed to the provincial government. How can we trust an education minister who so blatantly misrepresents the school boards?

Bill 104 also creates an Education Improvement Commission which does nothing to improve education at all. It is totally undemocratic and unaccountable, being appointed to run a system that we have elected local representatives to do. While the commission can advise or recommend certain things to the government as to their feasibility, it must "consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on how to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards." It cannot even recommend that the government keep these services, even if that's what it finds is best.

Custodial services are to be outsourced, and if the comments of Mr Snobelen are true, so are the services of guidance counsellors and teacher-librarians. The teacher-librarians have become critical partners with classroom teachers in planning and assisting students with independent research projects. You have a separate submission by them. As for the elimination of guidance counsellors, who is going to teach the guidance and career education component that the minister is introducing into the new graduation diploma requirements?

As for custodial services, are we sacrificing caring support staff for mere cleaners who will have no stake in the buildings they clean? The custodial support staff have provided a form of security system for the schools they tend. Do we now have to hire security guards as well?

How many classroom teachers, the very people who best know the system and would be best able to reform the system, are part of this process? None. Would you not call a doctor in to help solve a medical problem?

I challenge Mr Harris and Mr Snobelen to prove that what I have said today is not true, and if they can't, then no one in this government can justify doing anything but scrapping Bill 104.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Clark. We appreciate your presentation. We thank you also for the submission of the Lincoln County Teacher-Librarians Association.

ONTARIO ENGLISH CATHOLIC TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION, LONDON-MIDDLESEX UNIT

The Chair: The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, Catholic Central High School, Tony Huys. Thank you all very much for being here. We welcome you to the committee. I wonder if you might introduce yourself for the record.

Mr Tony Huys: On my left is Sheila Brescia. She's an elementary teacher and the president of the London-Middlesex OECA unit. On my right is John Mombourquette, a fellow teacher at Catholic Central High School and, I might add, a candidate for a doctorate at UWO.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to be here today and to present. We have a number of very serious concerns with some of the implications of Bill 104. We feel there are three problems, really: (1) We feel the bill goes too far; (2) we feel that it goes too fast; and (3) we feel the degree to which powers vested in the Education Improvement Commission — and I have difficulty with that term — is unprecedented and cynical.

The government's professed agenda here in Bill 104 is to reduce administrative costs. Given the expensive advice the government itself has received over the past number of years around the implications of reducing school boards and the relationship to cost, it seems a rather silly notion. The Sweeney report produced no analysis that reducing school boards will indeed reduce costs. The royal commission concluded that the number of boards does not relate one way or another to the quality of learning and the savings so generated don't appear to be huge. It considered it a non-starter.

The three studies available in Ontario — London-Middlesex, the Wells report in Windsor-Essex and the Ottawa-Carleton study — all indicate that there are very substantial initial costs in any amalgamation, and as a result nothing happened in those areas.

The preconceived notion that fewer boards will somehow translate into efficiencies is further discredited in a recent study by Professor Andrew Sancton of the University of Western Ontario. Professor Sancton studied the implications of municipal consolidations in the United States, in Britain and in Canada and he concludes that "there is no academic evidence to suggest that consolidation produces savings." He notes that even Margaret Thatcher, a noted — well, we all know Margaret Thatcher's reputation — concluded that amalgamation was not the way to save money, and she didn't do it.

Interjection: I love her.

Mr Huys: A lot of people do, I think.

Mr Wildman: She hopes to meet with Prime Minister Blair soon.

Mr Huys: She knighted Sir Roger Douglas.

This government has pledged to address the inequities that exist in education and we find that laudable, but we can't help but be struck by the fact that — my brief says there have been persistent reports of a \$1-billion cut to education; the Globe and Mail corrects that today: a \$1.5-billion cut to education. In our view, equity at the level of the lowest common denominator is not progress.

1820

We really don't know what the government plans to do with educational finance. We haven't seen the roadmap, so we're not sure where we're going, and a corollary to this lack of detail is the little information we have about how contracting out on successor rights for non-educational service providers will be guaranteed. We don't believe in the business of condemning workers to an ever-lowering rung on the wage ladder simply to squeeze a few bucks out of the system. We don't think that makes much economic sense, and we don't believe it's good Catholic social teaching.

Bill 104 and all the concomitant and surrounding changes that we are facing in education have thrown so many balls up in the air that we don't think all of them can survive. It's inevitable that the minister is going to drop some of these and he's going to break some of these. Some people consider that a skill, but we don't share that view.

I want to spend a moment or two on the implications of the Fewer School Boards Act and the constitutional guarantees for Catholic schools. There is little doubt in our minds that that guarantee is under attack. One of the earlier presenters was asked about OSSTA's brief on that, and I would refer to it and quote from it. Even OSSTA says: "We are pleased to note the government's continued commitment to constitutional rights that is reflected in the proposed revision to section 1(4) of the Education Act," and then, at the bottom of that same page asks the government to insert some additional wording. It says specifically to insert the following: "including rights and privileges as they were enjoyed by the separate school boards or their supporters under predecessors of this act as they existed immediately prior to January 13, 1997."

I don't understand why trustees would ask for a guarantee if they feel it's already there, but that is their wish. It's clear to us that even there trustees at least acknowledge implicitly that there is a change going on here.

One final comment on the plan to expand the authority of school councils, to compensate presumably for the reduced local authority of trustees: At a recent staff meeting, the chair of my school council, Catholic Central High School, emphasized that this was not a direction his council was either seeking or desirous of. In fact, he made it very, very clear that they want to remain an advisory body.

There are some other points in my brief, but I'm reluctant to use up all of my time, so I will end my comments here. Thank you.

Mr Froese: Thank you very much. Virtually everywhere we go some of the presentations could have just been handed one to the next to the next. We've heard

everything, and it's getting late in the day and it's getting tiring and we hear the same thing. But what I'm trying to do is understand from your perspective as teachers in all the school system.

You're arguing that we shouldn't be doing Bill 104, and I'm trying to find out and understand that if the trustees are reduced — and we claim what we claim, that reducing administration and streamlining and giving parents more involvement — you've heard it already. If you reduce the trustees, how does that affect your profession? How does that affect in-the-classroom teaching with the children, where we're trying to get the money in? I'm failing to understand buying the arguments from the teachers' associations that they're standing up and criticizing this government for reducing trustees, when it doesn't affect them one iota. Tell me how it affects your ability to teach the kids on a one-to-one basis in a classroom, when we're trying to get those resources into the classroom?

Mr Huys: Very quickly, every spring we go through a ritual called a budget cycle and we sometimes have dozens, even hundreds, of teachers at board meetings. Clearly, teachers would disagree with your analysis. They feel that their jobs and their lives and their ability to perform in the classroom are very much affected by locally made decisions, made by trustees who understand the local situation.

Let me just give you two simple examples. Last year there was a very heated debate about whether we ought to have kindergarten classes running alternate days or half days. That affected the way education is delivered in the classroom. That was a decision made by local trustees, where we think that decision is properly made.

Mr Froese: So when you reduce the trustees and you have more parent involvement, then that wouldn't be there, would it?

Mr Huys: The second decision had to do with the business of twinning schools and appointing one principal to two schools. These are two simple examples. We think that those are better made by local boards at the local level. Whether the boards have 12 or 15 trustees is perhaps not the critical issue here, but the point remains that they have to have real power to make real decisions. The decision to have junior kindergarten was simply a third one that local trustees made because they had the authority and power to do so.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate the frustration Mr Froese is having in understanding why people are concerned with this, because as people kept saying, everybody knows this is one piece of a puzzle, and it's much of the rest of the puzzle and the way the pieces fit together that has people really anxious. On the surface of it, this bill looks like there's not much there, but when you combine an amalgamation of boards, which makes boards less accessible to their local constituents, with the fact that the boards will not have any local funding accountability or flexibility, it creates two problems. One is, what is the funding going to be? That is the concern that you've addressed. The other I think is the concern about whether boards have any role at all.

That's what I'd like to ask you about, because I've heard that concern expressed several times tonight, that

this may be the first step towards loss of local governance and in fact the substitution of school boards with charter schools, increased privatization. As we look down that road, and I'm one of the people who believes that's definitely possible, even with the so-called protections of Catholic governance, what does that mean to kids in your school and to equity?

Mr Huys: Let me back up a moment here. Certainly we see this as a slippery slope. We're not sure why, for example, board jurisdictions are now perfectly aligned between Catholic and public school boards, but it does raise some very interesting questions which I have not addressed. Certainly these questions are being asked in the Catholic community.

Mrs Boyd: Thank you, Tony. I think maybe you might have better luck with Mr Froese if you described this as a hostile takeover of a family business, where the employer has had a relationship that has been developed over many years with employees and all of a sudden the employer changes, the circumstances change and in fact you suspect you may be required to produce a new and more timely product. I think really that's part of the problem here, isn't it?

Mr Huys: Yes.

Mrs Boyd: If we put it into that language, then it's no wonder that you're upset and that you see the way in which you've related and the way in which decisions are made changing quite remarkably and by no choice of either your local trustees or your employee groups, or indeed the parents who are involved. So I think maybe that might help.

I think you have been very clear about a lot of your concerns, but you haven't told us what is different between the three boards that are now going to be joined. You've got three boards that have been joined, and I know the decisions that those local trustees have made over the years are very different decisions in terms of what happens in the classroom.

Mr Huys: One of our concerns is the fact that we have absolutely no indication of how the government plans to move in that area, so it's very difficult for us to react until we see the map. That's true of the funding formula; that's certainly true of what, for example, will be the plan for amalgamating collective agreements. Are teachers from Glencoe now going to be transferred to Tillsonburg on June 20 or August 15? This is precisely the kind of issue that creates a ton of anxiety for our members, for the public, and we don't have answers. We can't even begin to address and discuss these issues intelligently because we don't know what the plan is.

But let me tell you this: So long as we're busy worrying about these things, we're going to be distracted from the real business we want to get at, and that is education. So long as we're wondering whether we'll exist or where we'll live next week or what will happen to this provision or that provision, we're being sidetracked from what we really want to do, and that is simply educate kids.

The Chair: On behalf of the committee, I want to thank all of you for taking the time to come here tonight and present your association's views.

1830

MARSHA SKRYPUCH

The Chair: Marsha Skrypuch. Welcome to the committee.

Mrs Marsha Skrypuch: I'm here as a parent. My son is in grade 7 in public school in Brant county. I've been president of a home and school association for two years in the past, I've volunteered at my son's school intensively over the years and I'm a published author. What I have to say is short, and I'm not a member of a union and I'm not a teacher.

Right now in Ontario we have a good school system, but there are a number of problems.

Interruption.

The Chair: Just a second. When you do that, you cut into the individual's time. There's so little time for people to participate. I would ask you please to refrain.

Mrs Skrypuch: For example, some Ontario students are more equal than others. A Brant county student does not have the same education options as a North York student or a student from Ottawa because currently our education system is paid for through property taxes. This means that wealthier areas with a better property tax base can afford to offer their students much more than rural or smaller areas. This government's plan to change the funding of schools so that each student in the province obtains equal funding is a good one.

Another problem with our current system is the huge cost of administration. Ontario school boards spend a full 47% of their budgets outside the classroom. Currently, there is much duplication in terms of curriculum development, payroll, accounting services, administration, purchasing and human resources. There's also the cost of running each individual board office. The government's plan to cut the number of boards, limit the number of trustees and cap their honorarium will do much to streamline the system. We must refocus our resources where they belong, and that is with individual students and teachers in the classroom, not board offices and administrators.

Perhaps the biggest problem facing our education system is sustainability. We, as taxpayers, must be able to afford our education system. Residential property taxpayers cannot continue to pay the spiralling costs imposed upon them by school boards, which have increased residential property taxes by an average of 5% each year over the last 10 years. Enrolment increased by 16% during that time, but school board spending increased by 82% and property taxes went up by more than 120%. How much longer can Ontario taxpayers sustain these spiralling costs?

I applaud the current government's plan to publish annual reports on education financing so that parents and taxpayers can evaluate their school board's performance and also see exactly where education dollars are being spent.

I am also in favour of the government's plan to establish mandatory parent councils in every school in the province. This parental involvement will go a long way in ensuring that the education agenda is focused in the

right place; namely, in the classroom and on the individual student.

Mrs McLeod: I wonder if you'd agree with the statement that was made by the last presenter that equity at the lowest common denominator is not progress.

Mrs Skrypuch: You're speaking to the lowest common denominator when you're speaking about Brantford, because we're not North York, we're not Toronto, we're not Ottawa. Our students don't have the same kind of enrichment opportunities or the same kind of special education opportunities as other students. It's easy for someone coming out of Toronto to say, "Everybody deserves what we have." But first of all, who's going to pay for it? Second of all, I think that if people in Toronto knew what it was like to be here, they might think twice about how property taxes and schooling were funded.

Mrs McLeod: That suggestion was not from Toronto, but I was also reflecting on some of the presenters who have been here today from what would be considered very assessment-poor boards and some of the dilemmas that they feel the new amalgamated boards are going to face. I think of one example that comes to mind where parents were saying one of the boards that's going to be amalgamated has a junior kindergarten program and the other one doesn't. But the other board has, I think this parent said, a home economics program and the other board does not have that.

The question is, which is more likely: that they're both going to end up with junior kindergarten and home ec or that they're both going to end up with neither, since to give both would cost more, and that's not the government's agenda?

Mrs Skrypuch: The thing is that if we can save money in administration, then hopefully both of those programs could be funded.

Mrs McLeod: Except that only \$150 million is projected to be saved and the government is looking to cut \$1.5 billion.

Mr Wildman: I'd just like to follow up on that, but first, before I do, could you indicate to me the source of your figures in paragraph three, the percentages?

Mrs Skrypuch: I had whole tons of clippings and I've just been following this for a number of weeks. I couldn't even tell you where I got everything.

Mr Wildman: Okay. I'll use figures that have been provided by the minister. The minister says that we spend \$13.5 billion on education annually in Ontario. He says that Bill 104 will save \$150 million, and he has said he hopes to take another \$1 billion out. It's reported in the press today from sources in the ministry that they're going to save —

Interjection.

Mr Wildman: Well, they're saying \$1.5 billion, but even if —

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): A no-name source, anonymous source.

The Chair: The government will have its turn. Mr Wildman, please continue.

Mr Wildman: All right. Then I won't go with the \$1.5 billion; I'll stick with the \$1 billion. If the minister is going to take \$1 billion out of the system and he's going to save \$150 million, how is that going to help assessment-poor boards like Brantford?

Mrs Skrypuch: You're telling me about this thing that you read in the newspaper today.

Mr Wildman: No, no. I'm sticking with the \$1 billion, not the \$1.5 billion that's in the paper, the \$1 billion which he said.

Mr Boyd: Snobelen said that.

Mr Wildman: Snobelen said that repeatedly.

Mrs Skrypuch: I think you have to understand, at least I do, that any government that wants to be re-elected is going to do all they can to improve an education system, not make it worse.

There's a tremendous amount of cynicism and distrust. It seems that no matter what this government does, people are bashing them and not even giving them a chance. I like what I've seen so far and I like the direction they're going in. I can't answer what you're saying about the newspaper today, I'm sorry.

Mr Wildman: I'm not quoting the newspaper today.

Mrs Skrypuch: I do like the direction that the government is going in. I know there are a lot of people who have got their pensions to worry about and they've got their job security. But I'm a parent and I'm worried about my child's education. That is what education is all about: the individual child —

Mr Wildman: Exactly. I agree with you.

Mrs Skrypuch: — not pensions, not unions.

Mr Wildman: And I'm worried about my child's education. That's why I'm worried about taking —

The Chair: Mr Wildman, you've had your turn.

Mr Wildman: That's why I'm worried about taking \$1 billion out of education.

Mr Young: Come on, Bud, show some courtesy.

Mr Ron Johnson (Brantford): Thank you for your presentation.

Mr Wildman: Show some courtesy. They all interrupted me.

Mr Ron Johnson: What we're seeing, I think, and what I've noticed even in the community here in Brantford, and most parents have relayed that to me, what we've already seen, and this is the second parent in a row: The majority of the presenters here are school board associations, school board trustees belonging to a school teacher union, but the parents who are coming here, people who don't have a special interest other than that of their child, are saying very clearly they support this bill. We're hearing that.

1840

Mr Wildman: No, it hasn't.

Mr Ron Johnson: Well, it has.

Mr Wildman: You haven't been there.

The Chair: Mr Wildman, please.

Mr Ron Johnson: I want to bring something up, because Mrs Skrypuch was absolutely correct: Brantford is on the lower end of the funding model. My question is obvious: As a community, how can we stand to lose with the new funding model? We can only stand to gain, Brant county. I ask you your comments on that.

Mrs Skrypuch: I would agree with that.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs Skrypuch, for coming here and bringing us your views. We appreciate it.

May I say to everyone in this room that people are entitled to bring their views forward. We may not always agree, but they have the absolute right, in a participatory democracy, to express their views, and I would appreciate it if we all would respect that.

Mrs McLeod: Just for the record, I won't attempt to go into the literally thousands of parents who have been represented by the presentations of school councils and home and school associations over the course of the last 10 days —

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: — but I do want to put on the record today that if we acknowledge individual parents' presentations, as we should, it should not be at the expense of recognizing, at my count, five group presentations.

Mr Young: Chair, please. Are we all going to have a one-minute speech now as well? I would prefer to hear from the presenters.

The Chair: Mr Young, I would appreciate your cooperation in this.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION, BRANT DISTRICT

BRANT WOMEN TEACHERS' FEDERATION NORFOLK WOMEN TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

The Chair: I ask the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, Brant region, to come forward: Ginny Chato, Gary Irwin and Shari Faryniuk. Thank you very much for being here. The hour is late, and you can see that passions are inflamed, but we are very much looking forward to your presentation.

Mr Gary Irwin: Thank you; as are our passions strong. Madam Chair, may I clarify that my name is Gary Irwin, president of Brant district OPSTF, which has approximately 200 members, and co-president of the Brant teachers' association of some 700 members.

I'd like to make some opening remarks related to the bill that I feel very strongly about, as do my members. Bill 104's provision of the Education Improvement Commission is perhaps the most draconian — on the bounds, I might say, of paranoia — aspect of this proposed legislation. My understanding is that Ontario still calls itself a democracy. How, then, can such a dictatorial piece of legislation be put forward by this government? The sweeping powers of the EIC allow for no questioning of the commission's decisions or appeal process of the same through the courts. The "special" judicial authority given to the EIC places it in special status above and beyond the legal process. This intrusion on the democratic process cannot be allowed to stand.

The members of the Brant district Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation urge you in the strongest terms possible to review the proposed wording and intent as they stand now and replace the same with some form of compromise that can be supported in a contemporary democracy. Have you heard these ideas expressed by others? Perhaps. That is because there is a great deal of legitimate concern by citizens over this aspect of the bill.

The issue of the government's intention to involve itself in outsourcing as a means of providing services needs to be addressed. Young children have a right to be

schooled in a safe environment. As well, they will thrive better in an environment that is consistent in its personnel. The caretaker and secretary of a school, by example, are trusted and influential friends in a young child's life. To regularly replace personnel with a host of replacement staff is to undermine the trust and security of children. If the government proposal to move towards outsourcing comes into being, then the Maclean's cover story of February 10, 1997, "Are Your Kids Safe?" has even more credibility.

Must every piece of proposed legislation that emanates from Queen's Park be based on dollars? I urge the Harris government to do something for the protection of our school children. Remove the concept of outsourcing from Bill 104.

I have a concern related to the reserve funds of the Brant County Board of Education which, depending on whom you talk to, run anywhere from \$6 million to \$10 million or \$11 million. I understand that with this bill that money is essentially frozen, and yet through the amalgamation of the boards, the boards we would be amalgamating with don't have nearly that amount of money. What happens to that money? We believe that was raised on the backs of teachers in this county. Will that be shared by the newly amalgamated board or will it stay in Brant county, where it should be?

Finally, I'm not surprised to see that this government continues to legislate with proposals that are long on generalities and very, very short on specifics. In the amalgamation of the boards of Brant, Norfolk and Haldimand, otherwise known as "Baldfolk" or, if you prefer, "Hanobra," how are we to achieve a collective agreement? No process is provided in the legislation. No steps are delineated that would assist the teachers in melding three collective agreements into one. The differences between our present agreements are dramatic. What handles are given to us to meaningfully address the challenge of negotiations? As well, who are the trustees we're going to negotiate with? We urge this government to immediately be forthcoming with some specifics as they relate to the collective bargaining process.

Mrs Ginny Chato: I guess I'm next. I'm Ginny Chato, president of the Brant Women Teachers' Federation.

If the reduction of school boards were motivated for the betterment of education and students in the classroom, we would agree with this legislation. However, we cannot see how having fewer people accountable and as resources at the local level can improve the quality of education. The minister expects us to agree with the proposed legislation and trust him on the other components once the bill has passed. As the government rushes to change education, people are being forced to take positions based on incomplete information, without knowing what the funding structure for education will be.

Removing education from property taxes and reducing the number of boards will give the government the control it needs to reduce overall funding. We have had no evidence from this government so far that it would put principles of sound education ahead of indiscriminate budget cutting.

To improve accountability and community involvement in the education system, Mr Snobelen announced that the

government will pass legislation requiring that every school have an advisory council. While we support more parental involvement, we're not sure legislating parents to be more involved is the democratic way to proceed. Parents should not be legislated to pick up major responsibilities in governing education, as they are not accountable. Has your government asked parents if they wish this responsibility, or which responsibilities they feel comfortable with?

When we amalgamate with three counties, will our students receive the lowest common denominator of services? For example, I am aware that Norfolk students have music itinerants and computer teachers in every school. With the amalgamation, does this mean that Norfolk students will lose these programs, or does it mean that the Brant and Haldimand students will gain these programs? Does the province intend to reduce the funding, as it did with JK, and then state that it did not cut the programs, the boards did, as it did at the local level with JK programs?

We have been a frugal board. We educate our students for \$500 below the provincial median. Our trustees make \$7,865. We feel our board is already efficient. I can't imagine, with the number of meetings that trustees have to attend, that we would get qualified people for \$5,000. If we provide mileage for our board members to travel, how will money be saved?

I'm extremely worried that we are heading down the road of some less successful model for education. For example, in Michigan principals and vice-principals were taken out of the bargaining unit, something that, according to this bill, would be encouraged, under clause 335(3)(f). Now Michigan has passed legislation that principals do not have to be educators. Who, then, is going to be the curriculum leader in their building, which is even more important with the downsizing of support personnel?

Gerald Caplan, co-chair of the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning, stated: "Our commission was unable to find any research or experience anywhere that helped establish a better governance system for Ontario schools than the present one. The Harris government has not a jot of evidence that the system it's about to impose on us will work any better. But it may be worse...even less democratic, less accountable, more bureaucratic than the one it will replace."

Ms Shari Faryniuk: My name is Shari Faryniuk. I'm with the Norfolk Women Teachers' Association. I think this actually serves as a very visual reminder to this group that we have already been amalgamated and are seen to be one group, when we are definitely not.

I also would like to begin by stating my deep disappointment that Mr Barrett is not here. It was my understanding at a meeting that was held in Norfolk that Mr Barrett was very proud to have been in the group that interviewed and decided who was on the EIC. I would like to let you know that I intend to share his absence with the constituents in Norfolk.

1850

Bill 104 purports in its opening statement that it is an act "to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system." Also known as the

Fewer School Boards Act, a huge leap of faith is required in accepting the unproven premise that bigger is better. In Norfolk, we think smaller is smarter.

Bill 104 requires acceptance of the position that current boards of education have behaved in fiscally irresponsible ways and have been flagrantly overspending. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Changes in education funding were to be offset by downloading. Major responsibility for funding welfare services, social housing, public health programs, child care, elder care, ambulance services and social housing have been downloaded to local governments. These costs are unknowns. It appears that costs will increase. Taxpayers will pay more. Where are the savings? What is the means test for accountability that will be applied?

Norfolk is a board that has long prided itself on fiscal responsibility and academic excellence. Our current MPP, Toby Barrett, is not only a product of our system but once was a deliverer of its services. Before we blur the identity of Norfolk into a larger amalgamation of Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk, let us examine and question what advantages are to be won by the Fewer School Boards Act.

Norfolk is a rural board that meets the diverse needs of a widespread community. Will the concerns and needs of both pupils and parents be better met by a larger board with fewer trustees responsible to and for an even larger constituency?

I'm going to respond here to you, Mr Froese, because you asked how trustees impact on the schools — and in the classrooms, because the schools are made up of classrooms. In our schools, our trustees go into the classrooms and serve as volunteers and are there with us, walk with us, talk with us and are with our kids and know our needs directly. I think it's going to be a little more difficult for me to get a trustee from Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk and perhaps Oxford to come down and take part in a reading program. I just wanted to respond to that because I heard that question and I felt a need to let you know.

Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk will encompass a large geographical area. Presently, parents who wish to communicate with their trustees can do so with little difficulty. Our trustees in Norfolk know their schools, they know their communities and they welcome contact from staff, students and parents. I have taught in no fewer than nine schools in Norfolk and I know this to be true in every single one of those schools. I have taught in the separate system, I have taught in a secondary school and I have taught in elementary schools. The response, the involvement is the same.

Bill 104 protects decisions that can be made by the Education Improvement Commission. They are final and shall not be reversed or questioned by a court. Why is there such fear? Why the need for such irrevocable control? At present, the Norfolk board is responsible and accountable for its decisions to the electorate. This body includes the parents and community of people who have a direct and vested interest in the schools and the curricula. The students of Norfolk, then, are guaranteed their needs will be met by decisions of local trustees who are accessible, known and trusted, and if they do not

perform, it is very obvious to everybody and it's obvious immediately.

Is bigger better? Is bigger more efficient? Mega-boards will have mega-responsibilities. Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk and possibly Oxford will be a vast geographical board. The familiar faces, the binding trust of neighbourhood will not be transferred easily.

In Norfolk, our house is in order. This government considers classroom teachers and classroom supplies as the only legitimate classrooms costs. Supposed administrative costs include building maintenance, secretaries, custodians, principals, vice-principals, teacher-librarians, guidance counsellors, special education support, education assistants, records and finance controls. Make it an analogy to a house or make it an analogy to a government: Costs for running it are all of a piece.

I keep hearing about school councils. I welcome them. I welcome their involvement. But perhaps we need government councils; groups of community citizens who are directly involved and sit and give you advice on an ongoing basis about what you do.

Social services and health care have traditionally — this is very important — been underfunded in Norfolk and we have been underserved in both areas for many years. Schools, teachers, and trustees have long accepted the burden and responsibility of filling these gaps. You just have to look on the boards of women's shelters, hospital boards, health council boards, children's aid society boards, Big Brothers and Big Sisters boards and you will find teachers. They're always there. Will these areas of underfunding be reduced under Bill 104? We maintain gaps will increase.

Students are our future. The economy of the individual, the family, the community and the province are interdependent. Larger school boards and changes in education funding supposedly will have positive outcomes. How and when this will become a reality is an unknown. There are too many unknowns and too few details in Bill 104 to strike confidence in anyone.

The Norfolk Women Teachers' Association believes that Bill 104 will harm structures now in place. We believe that education is too important to be left to political whims of change. The changes Bill 104 purports to make will not achieve substantive improvements, and will only see direct control seized from the hands of locally elected officials. Our students will inherit the legacy of this legislation. We urge you to reconsider Bill 104. The Norfolk Women Teachers' Association will be watching with interest the decisions you make.

The Chair: Thank you all very much for being here tonight and presenting your views. Regrettably, there is no time for questions.

HAMILTON-WENTWORTH COALITION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Chair: The Hamilton-Wentworth Coalition for Social Justice, Robert Mann. Welcome, Mr Mann. We're pleased to have you here with us at the hearings. I would ask you to present your co-presenter and then you have 15 minutes for your presentation.

Mr Robert Mann: This is Mike Mirza. He's also a member of our coalition for social justice in Hamilton.

Before I submit my own brief, I'd like to make everybody aware of the fact that in Hamilton there were shadow hearings conducted this past Saturday because there has been denied to Hamilton the opportunity to have these hearings conducted inside Hamilton. So following the submission of our brief from the social justice coalition, I hope the Chair would accept the submissions from those hearings that were conducted on Saturday.

The Chair: Thank you very much. If you could deposit them with the clerk.

Mr Mann: Members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to address you on the important issue of education governance and finance in Ontario.

We would like to start by calling on you, the committee, to recommend the withdrawal of the bill, and we call on the government to withdraw the bill. In our view, the bill is so thoroughly flawed that it is unamendable.

Creating a crisis: The education minister began his term of office by calling on a team of bureaucrats at Queen's Park to "engineer a useful crisis" in public education as a means to force through radical change. Unfortunately for the government, but fortunately for the public, this seminar led by the minister was captured on videotape. The public knows that there is no inherent crisis in public education, other than that which the government and the minister have set out to create, and that's been known for quite some time.

Democratic governance: The government is proposing the most sweeping changes to the governance of public education in 150 years. The reduction in the number of school boards across Ontario will make many of the new district school boards among the largest in Canada. The new Toronto district school board, with 310,000 students, will be the largest in North America. The new Hamilton-Wentworth district school board will have twice the current enrolment. Both will have substantially lower per pupil grant levels than the current smaller boards, thus ensuring that bigger is meaner, leaner and will be financially able only to provide a poorer-quality public education.

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Eliminating hundreds of locally elected and accountable trustees across the province is intended to eliminate, or at least render ineffective, the growing and massive opposition to the attack on universal, quality public education.

Boards in trusteeship: The government's real intent with respect to school boards in Ontario is to eliminate school boards altogether. This is evident in the illegal provincial and local trusteeships imposed on school boards across the province, an illegality established in February when the Ontario Court of Appeal found the same trusteeships in Bill 103 to be illegal and without force of law. In both bills, the trusteeships are described as transitional. However, in Bill 104 the transition period will extend throughout the remainder of the current term of office of elected school trustees and extend for a further three years, throughout the entire term of the new district school boards.

The powers of the trusteeships are vast, arbitrary and unilateral. The committees of trusteeship are unelected,

unaccountable and their directives have the force of law. At the same time, none of those who are appointed to the committees of trusteeship, provincially or locally, can be held individually or legally responsible for their legally binding directives to school boards. They are beyond the law.

It is clear that the new district boards are completely powerless and impotent. They are a shell whose sole purpose is to redirect public attention from the government's real agenda, which is to eliminate school boards altogether in Ontario, as has already been done in New Brunswick.

The other purpose of the new district boards will be to act as a complaints bureau for parents and the public, who will be beating a path to the new district board offices when they find out what the government really meant by cutting administration and funding only the classroom.

Massive funding cuts: Unlike Bill 103, which deals with both governance and finance, Bill 104 gives no clear picture of what "the classroom" and public education will look like once the legislation is passed and implemented.

At present, the per pupil costs of educating a child in Ontario range from a high of about \$7,500 in Metro Toronto to as low as \$4,500 in some of the poorest boards in the province. Equity, in the view of this government, does not mean providing the needed funding to ensure the highest quality to children and boards across the province. To this government, equity means driving down costs so that every public board is equally poor and every child equally disfranchised, no matter where they attend school.

The proof of this is the government's stated intention to drive down the per pupil costs, and to do it making a further \$1-billion cut to education in 1997-98, maybe \$1.5 billion. This is in addition to the \$400-million cut in the last four months of 1996, which resulted in the elimination of junior kindergarten, the decimation of adult education, the elimination of many important program offerings in schools, the layoff of many teachers and a substantial jump in class size across the province. It is over and above the \$300 million that has so far been shaved off the education budget for the first three months of 1997.

A further \$1-billion cut later this year will make our schools unrecognizable as public institutions mandated to provide universal standards of quality education, of excellence in education, open, accessible and free to every student in Ontario.

What will our schools look like? The government says that the \$1-billion cut will only cut trustees' honoraria and administration, but the honoraria are comparatively small. The average in the province is below \$10,000. What, then, is administration? According to the government, administration is virtually everything but the teacher's salary.

"The classroom," which the government says is the only thing it will support, does not include the school building, heat or hydro or school maintenance and caretakers. The classroom doesn't include the library or the librarian. It doesn't include the principal or the vice-principal. It doesn't include the guidance teacher or special education teachers, or special education programs

either, for that matter. It doesn't include music, art, physical education or other program frills and extras such as field trips, lunchroom supervision, lunchroom programs. It doesn't include kindergarten, English as a second language or adult education. It doesn't include social workers, speech and language pathologists, curriculum and resource specialists.

The government's definition of the "classroom" it will fund is the one-room schoolhouse of 100 years ago, minus the school.

Its definition of "administration," on the other hand, the administration that it will not fund, is everything that makes public education in Ontario one of the finest systems of public education in the world. It's what has won Ontario the prestigious and internationally recognized Bertelsmann award for excellence in education, which even Premier Harris boasted about when in Europe last winter, convincing investors that Ontario had the highest-quality social infrastructure in the world.

But the government's agenda for public education will result in the destruction of this fine system and is opening the door even now to private schools, a voucher system and charter schools, which are publicly funded private schools. When asked where the government stands on charter schools at a recent meeting, government members were making such comments as, "It's not on our agenda this spring."

In the Saturday, March 22, issue of the Toronto Star, an article on the impact of the government's health care cuts and hospital shutdowns showed how Ontario's citizens will drop from having the highest level of care per capita in North America to having the lowest level of care on the continent.

It appears that the government's intentions with respect to public education are equally sinister, or in any event will have the same devastating impact on our children and on the future of our province and our country.

Massive tax shifts: The relief felt by many when it was announced that education would be lifted from the property tax was short-lived. It will not provide needed relief to overburdened ratepayers and tenants, who could and should have seen their property taxes cut in half with this measure. It is not even revenue-neutral, since the costs of social housing, social welfare, public transit, public health and more are to be shifted on to residential taxes. In many, many areas property taxes will increase substantially, despite the fact that education accounts for more than 50% of the property tax bill.

Meanwhile Bill 106, introducing actual value assessment, otherwise known as market value assessment, into the greater Toronto area will see a huge offloading of approximately \$125 million from the commercial-industrial tax on to residential taxes. The elimination of the business occupancy tax, which is a further windfall to corporate interests, will lead to the further offloading from the commercial-industrial tax on to residential property taxes. The alternative is to eliminate desperately needed municipal services or introduce even more user fees at the local level.

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The Chair: Mr Mann, I don't know how long your brief is, but I would ask you to start thinking about wrapping up.

Mr Michael Mirza: We've got a whole page there. We came from Hamilton.

The Chair: I appreciate that. A lot of people came from a long distance.

Mr Mirza: And we are mad as hell because our legislative member didn't have the guts to bring it to Hamilton —

The Chair: Mr Mirza, I understand your frustration. A lot of people wanted to present. Mr Mann, could I ask you to wrap up, please.

Mr Mann: Genuine and needed reform would include the following:

(1) Removal of education from the property tax combined with implementation of a progressive provincial tax policy based on ability to pay. The Fair Tax Commission has advanced such a proposal.

(2) Strengthening of local autonomy by increasing provincial expenditures on public education, recognizing the real per pupil costs of delivering quality public education and transferring these to local school boards through statutory, unconditional provincial grants.

(3) Guaranteeing province-wide standards for public education by adopting an education bill of rights guaranteeing every child access to a full range of educational instruction programs and services including, but not limited to, the rights to access junior kindergarten, adult education, special education and a full range of art, music and physical education instruction.

(4) Press for the introduction of confederated school boards which will meet constitutional requirements for public and separate school systems and achieve real financial savings.

(5) Press for constitutional recognition of school boards, removing them from their present status as creatures of the provincial government which can be dismissed at will.

Conclusion: The government should withdraw Bill 104, and the related mega-legislation for that matter, while there is still time to save our fine system of universal, quality public education and our equally fine system of local democratic governance and local autonomy.

Public education, like medicare, is a sacred trust to Ontarians of all ages, backgrounds and political stripes. We urge the government to recognize its responsibility to safeguard this sacred public trust by withdrawing the legislation forthwith and by substantially increasing the overall funding for universal public education at once. That's respectfully submitted.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Mann. I want to, on behalf of the committee, express our appreciation for your brief and also for the other submissions that you made on behalf of Hamilton.

Interruption.

DAVE HUGMAN

The Chair: Dave Hugman, please.

Applause.

The Chair: Is Dave Hugman in the room? Mr Hugman, you may think this applause is for you if you wish.

Mrs Johns: On a point of order, Madam Chair: Don't you think you should explain how the process works so he understands? That has been the practice.

The Chair: Mr Johnson. One at a time, please, committee members.

Mr Ron Johnson: I'll be very quick. Sensing the frustration of the presenter, it should be known that it's not the government that decides where committee goes. It is the subcommittee that makes that decision, and that should not reflect on the local member for Hamilton.

The Chair: Mr Wildman, I will allow one brief intervention.

Mr Wildman: Mr Johnson is correct. To be fair, the subcommittee did propose where the committee go, keeping in mind that the subcommittee was working within the parameters of a time allocation motion presented by the government that limited the amount of time we could deal with this bill.

Interruption.

The Chair: That's really quite enough. Excuse me, members. I think both sides —

Mr Young: How long were the hearings for the social contract, Bud?

The Chair: Mr Young.

Mr Wildman: Six months with negotiations.

Mr Young: Zero.

The Chair: Can we have some order, please. I think both sides of the issue have been fairly stated. It is now Mr Hugman's turn, and I hope the committee will want to hear what Mr Hugman has to say.

Mr Dave Hugman: Thanks for allowing me the opportunity. It's been a long, hard day on the road. I haven't seen my family. I intend to be as brief and concise as possible with this report. I'm sure you can appreciate that.

My name is Dave Hugman. I'm a resident of Brantford, Ontario. I'm a father of two daughters: Shannon, who's age six and presently in French immersion kindergarten; and Christie, who's age three and enrolled in a pre-school program three mornings a week at Fairview United Church.

My presentation this evening will cover three main points: parents as full partners in education of their children; the merging and rationalization of school boards; and finally, reinvesting in education under the new funding model.

As a parent taking an active role in my children's education, what I like best about Bill 104 is that the new curriculum will be measurable every step of the way due to province-wide testing. I feel it is essential for parents to know how their children measure up, their weaknesses and their strengths. Knowing these weaknesses and strengths will help me maximize the focus and results of my home education program.

Bill 104's province-wide testing will supply us with the statistics that will allow us to recognize regional discrepancies. Districts achieving outstanding results can be used as models for districts that are consistently below standards. In short, Bill 104 will empower parents and allow them to take a more precise role in the home education of their children.

The clearly defined, province-wide curriculum, founded in the basic core subjects of reading, math, science etc, is exactly the academic path I want my children to follow.

My second point, the merging and rationalization of school boards: When I read A Report on School Board Spending, 1995 to 1996, I was absolutely appalled to find that, on average, for every dollar spent in the classroom 80 cents was spent outside the classroom, that some school boards directed as little as 51% of their resources to the class. Equally concerning was that enrolment rose 16% from 1985 to 1995, but the boards' spending rose 82% and taxes increased 120%, and most of all, that we are paying some trustees \$49,000 a year to do this to us.

It was clear to me that Bill 104 was on track in reducing the number of Ontario school boards from 129 to 66, and it was necessary to reduce the number of trustees from 1,900 to 700, as well as limiting their annual pay to a \$5,000 honorarium.

My third and final point is reinvesting in education under the new funding model. As a parent, I am pleased to see that Bill 104 will give us published annual reports — parents will now be able to evaluate exactly where their educational dollars are being spent; that revenue contributed by businesses will stay in the community where that money was raised — I can't help but feel that this will help foster good corporate citizens; that the Minister of Education will reinvest some of the bureaucratic savings realized in Bill 104 back to the classroom.

In conclusion, Bill 104 will make it easier for parents to participate in their children's education. As well, Bill 104 will re-engineer our education system, whereby classroom spending is increased and bureaucratic spending is decreased. With that, I'd like to thank the committee for allowing me to express my views.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much for your presentation. I appreciate your concise and clear approach. I just would ask, though, you are aware that the testing and the funding model are not part of Bill 104?

Mr Hugman: No, the overall general approach to education is what I'm commenting on.

Mr Wildman: You said, "What I like best about Bill 104 is that the new curriculum will be measurable every step of the way due to province-wide testing."

Mr Hugman: Let me clarify that, then, Mr Wildman. What I like best about the policies with respect to education that this government is putting forward is what I said in the points I made. How does that sound?

Mr Wildman: So you're talking about the overall policy, of which Bill 104 is just one piece of the puzzle.

Mr Hugman: Absolutely.

Mr Wildman: We haven't yet seen the funding model.

Mr Hugman: I think we have some very real commitments, from what I've read and heard, about putting dollars back into the classroom, about reinvesting into, for instance, computers, upgrading systems such as that.

Mr Wildman: We don't know what the numbers are.

Mr Hugman: No, but there's a commitment to reinvest. I can't help but feel, no matter whose party you belong to, that you want your kids to have the best education possible.

Mr Wildman: Obviously.

Mr Ron Johnson: Thank you for your presentation. Again I'd like to note for the committee that parents seem supportive. But my question to you is this: As a

Brantford resident, do you remember about a year ago when the provincial government came through with some funding reductions to both boards here in Brant county? It seemed to me at the time — and I want to know if you remember this — the teachers were jumping up and down, calling the school board trustees every name under the sun because they didn't like the way the trustees dealt with funding reductions. It seems now that the teachers are the very first people to jump to the defence of school boards. I guess I want you to speculate as to why.

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Mr Hugman: I have a really hard time with the whole situation and the relationship as it stands right now with school board trustees and teachers. As it stands right now, from what I understand, a teacher's husband could be a trustee. As far as I'm concerned, that's kind of like the fox running the chicken house. The whole situation is nefarious at best. Obviously the teachers are in it for the dollar. They're protecting their interests. I personally don't think there's anything wrong with that — I'd probably be doing the same thing if I were them — but it does seem a little ridiculous. When we read all the hard feelings going on here in Brant county with the negotiations, and then to turn around and get on their side so quickly, I think politics is at play there.

Mr Duncan: Just a couple of brief notes. This bill doesn't deal with curriculum; it doesn't deal with the funding model. The proposals on curriculum decrease the number of hours for math and English. Second, the government has placed a number of numbers out and I've asked for responses on them and haven't had them provided. In fact, yes, enrolment has gone up 16%, but no credible authority agrees about the 82% figure that you quoted. I don't know where you got that number. Your numbers are wrong, and if they're not, provide them.

Mr Ron Johnson: Yes, and you had your budget balanced.

The Chair: Mr Johnson, you had your turn to speak, please.

Mr Duncan: Not only have expenditures not gone up 82%, the number is closer to 30%, and taxes have not gone up 120%. In a number of boards they've actually gone down when you account for inflation. If that's not accurate, produce your numbers. We've asked you to do that for two weeks, but you haven't. Why? Because you're lying to the people of Ontario and you know it.

The Chair: Order, please.

Mr Duncan: Let me tell you another thing. You want to deal with curriculum? We put a motion to deal with curriculum. They voted it down. You want to deal with funding? We put a motion. They voted it down. They don't want to deal with that. They want to take money from your kids, money out of classrooms, and give it back to a tax cut. The false figures and the misleading information the government has provided are just getting me sick, and everyone in this province should be sick.

The Chair: Mr Hugman, I want to thank you for being here today. There are no more questions.

Mr Hugman: Madam Chair, was that a question?

The Chair: No, it was not, Mr Hugman. It was a comment. I should explain that the members can use their

time in whatever way they wish, but we thank you very much for coming forward with your views.

Mr Young: On a point of order, Madam Chair: I'd like to give Mr Duncan an opportunity to withdraw the unparliamentary language.

Mr Duncan: No, I won't. It's not unparliamentary. I'd ask the government to withdraw the misleading statistics and the false campaign it's waging against students and children and parents in this province, and you ought to be ashamed of it.

The Chair: Mr Duncan, I've allowed you a fair bit of latitude —

Mr Young: The leadership is over, Dwight. You lost.

The Chair: Mr Young, that's uncalled for. Ladies and gentlemen, I've allowed a fair bit of latitude. I will not allow it again. If we get into an outburst, I will recess the committee.

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF CAREER COLLEGES

The Chair: Can we move, please, to the Ontario Association of Career Colleges, Paul Kitchin and Lorna Hillis. Thank you very much for being here and thank you for your patience. I know we're a little bit behind schedule.

Mr Paul Kitchin: Thank you very much. We appreciate the opportunity to address the panel on this subject. My name is Paul Kitchin and I am the executive director with the Ontario Association of Career Colleges. While most of my remarks tonight will be reflecting the views of the membership of our association, many of my comments will reflect my own thoughts as a parent and as a taxpayer.

As a parent, I have three children enrolled in grades 5, 8 and 12 in our education system, and as a parent, my concerns certainly are with the quality of education they are receiving, along with other children, as well as the quality of education they will continue to receive during the balance of the time they are enrolled within the system.

As a taxpayer, as a resident of Brantford and someone who has paid taxes in this province for more than 28 years, I am very concerned about the effective and efficient use of my tax dollars, particularly in terms of education in the province.

As the executive director of the Ontario Association of Career Colleges, I represent the views of private sector, post-secondary education and training institutions in this province. There are currently 340 such institutions, which enrol in excess of 60,000 students into post-secondary programs annually. As educators and trainers in this province. There are currently 340 such institutions, which enrol in excess of 60,000 students into post-secondary programs annually. As educators and trainers at the post-secondary level, our members are quite concerned with the quality of students who are leaving our school system and are enrolling in post-secondary programs each year. As taxpaying organizations, our members are also concerned with the effective and efficient use of tax dollars in terms of our education system.

In evaluating the current system in Ontario, our members have identified some concerns they wish to express. I will spend a few minutes going over the details of some of those concerns and then move on to addressing how Bill 104 addresses those concerns.

The members of the Ontario Association of Career Colleges are interested in the quality of education and believe that the sole objective of any reform dealing with education certainly should look at the improvement of the quality of education. We certainly believe that being able to put more resources back into the system, back into the classroom where they're needed, is important. We feel that any analysis where you're looking at how more resources can be put into the classroom where my children and other children can benefit means you need to take a look basically at three issues: (1) source of funding; (2) the allocation of funds for administrative versus classroom activities; and (3) the ultimate use of dollars that have been earmarked for use in the classroom.

If I start with the source of funds, our members certainly believe, or are concerned at the level of taxation now, how related that is to education. They believe that business and individual taxpayers can no longer absorb continuing increases in costs of taxes related to education.

During the past 10 years the information I am aware of indicates that over that period of time, school-related taxes have increased at least by an average of 5% per year for the 10 years, for a total of a 50% increase. By contrast, the average taxpayer has not had an increase that amounts to 50%. In fact, it would be somewhat lower than that. Small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario have not seen profits that have increased by anywhere close to 50%. In fact, many of those businesses have had to take a look at cutting costs just to be able to stay in business and to be able to keep from laying off taxpaying employees who support the system. There is a limit, we believe, to the amount of tax that businesses and individuals can be expected to pay, or can afford to pay, and we believe we've reached that limit.

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On the other side of it, we also understand that Ontario is broke. We understand that if there is any interest in adding new programs into the system, the government is faced with two choices: One is to borrow money, usually from foreign sources; or to raise taxes one more time. We feel that this practice needs to stop and that we need to look at other ways of doing things.

Many of us with families or in businesses have learned over the last 10 years to do more with less. We have had to make some tough decisions, and we feel that the school boards and government are now in that position as well where they need to make some tough decisions.

As with the previous speaker, my understanding is that in the past year 80% of the school boards have raised taxes at a time when government was encouraging them not to, while government was looking at cutting its own costs as well. I think this is very important to the discussion we've got in terms of how far people can be expected to absorb increases in taxes.

The second point I mentioned was the allocation of funds to administrative activities versus classroom activities. Our membership believes that where possible, we should be looking at ways of streamlining our school system so that the administrative costs come down, so that we have an opportunity to put more resources back into the classroom. We think there should certainly be an accountability for the way that money is spent. With an

annual budget of something in the neighbourhood of \$13 billion, the resources need to be well managed and there needs to be accountability. We would support any moves that would take us in that direction.

Once again, as with the previous speaker, my understanding certainly is that some boards in this province in the last two years have spent as little as 51% of their funds on classroom activities and that on average, for every dollar spent in the classroom, 80 cents is spent outside the classroom. We think that the spending outside the classroom needs to be reduced, and that by doing so, it does give the ability to put more money back into the classroom, back into the hands of the teachers.

We believe there needs to be streamlining of administration. We note that other jurisdictions have already taken steps to eliminate duplication, eliminate waste and bring down the cost of administration. In a province where we have 129 school boards and 1,900 trustees, we feel there's ample room for reduction to take place. It's a hard bullet to swallow, but we're at the point where we need to take a look at that.

As taxpayers, our members have watched in the past as school boards have built elaborate administrative centres and offices that many businesses would not be able to afford to erect, and we feel there needs to be more respect for the tax dollar and the way that it is spent. Much the same as the owner of a business may have to make a hard decision to wait an extra year to buy a delivery van to use in their business, again school boards may have to learn when to say no and when to take a look at delaying some of their spending and spend more effectively.

I understand that again the enrolment in the province has increased by 16% over the last 10 years. I also understand that the spending has gone up. I heard some debate a few minutes ago, and I don't want to get into that again, but certainly the costs have gone up way over the 16% enrolment.

In the time of recession that we've had over the last 10 years, any business that would have operated that way likely would be in a bankruptcy situation right now. We can't afford to have a bankrupt education system. Spending has to come under control.

The third point I raised was in terms of the ultimate use of dollars that have been earmarked for the classroom. The Ontario Association of Career Colleges has some concerns over some recent trends whereby school boards have begun to establish non-profit career training centres or for-profit career training centres or non-profit corporations to provide adult post-secondary vocational training, using the dollars that were earmarked for the classroom to subsidize the fees in these centres, particularly when there is already a delivery system in the private sector that is providing similar kinds of programs.

This seems wasteful and seems like a misdirection of funds to us. An example of this would be the Ontario Member School Board Corp, which I understand has recently recruited as many as 12 or 14 school boards in the province to be involved in these kinds of activities. Our fear is that if this goes unrestricted, there may be even greater diversion of funds away from the classroom, and we don't think this is a positive direction.

There are some questions that we feel need to be asked and answered about this kind of activity. Are school boards permitted, or are they required when they're running these kinds of programs, to charge the public the full cost of the programs? If they are, are the full costs of personnel, plant and equipment being charged to the programs appropriately when the fees are set? And if not, are school boards permitted to divert funds from the classroom to support and subsidize these programs?

In relation to this issue, another consideration is the treatment of the centres or corporations in terms of taxation, in terms of GST and property taxes. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has recently written to the minister of revenue asking for a ruling on the status of these non-profit corporations or for-profit centres. They are concerned that with an eligibility for the centres to get rebates under GST, to not have to pay property taxes, to subsidize these programs with tax dollars that should be in the classroom, they are becoming a threat to the viability of the private training sector that is already there providing those kinds of programs. We don't understand why energies are being put in those directions when they should be centred on what school boards are there for: to train your children and my children.

The Chair: Excuse me. Your brief appears to be a fairly lengthy one. I wonder if you might try and sum up.

Mr Kitchin: What I wanted to touch on then was the effectiveness of Bill 104 to deal with those concerns. Our association's members would support a reduction of the number of school boards. The proposal from 129 to 66 seems reasonable to us. We would certainly need some more data but we would support that direction. We would support the reduction of the number of trustees from 1,900 to 700, as we see this as a way to save some administrative money and put it back into the classroom.

We would support the concept of going to honorariums that are capped at \$5,000, as we see that as another way to save some money and put it where it belongs.

We support the concept of the school councils where parents have a greater involvement and can share in some of the accountability around programs and the funding in our schools.

The final point I would make is that we certainly support the concept that when local businesses are taxed, those tax dollars will remain in the community to help support local education.

There was one more point on this: We find that Bill 104 is lacking in its attention to the issue I raised around adult career training centres that are being run by school boards. We would like it if this panel would consider addressing that issue in any amendments to Bill 104.

In summary, we at the Ontario Association of Career Colleges believe that we need to reduce administrative spending, put more resources into the classroom and ease the burden on taxpayers. Thank you very much for your time.

The Chair: Mr Kitchin, thank you very much, on behalf of the committee, for coming here, together with Ms Hillis. We appreciate your views.

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Mr Wildman: Madam Chair, you'll recall that in Sudbury we had a presentation from the association of

career colleges as well. It raised some similar points to Mr Kitchin's, and in response to that, I asked some questions of the parliamentary assistant. In the questions and answers that were tabled yesterday by the parliamentary assistant, two dealt with the issues of the last point that Mr Kitchin raised, and I'd like to refer briefly to that.

I asked the parliamentary assistant whether the ministry has investigated whether or not the Huron County Board of Education has engaged in adult education training for profit, which is one of the issues that was raised. The answer tabled yesterday was:

"The Huron county board has responded to the needs of adult learners by providing programs for adult clients who can learn in a regular setting as well as for those who are lower-functioning academically. The board is paid by Human Resources Development Canada" — the federal government — "to deliver the programs at a rate of \$66 per hour, which just covers the costs associated with the program, that is, staffing, consumables, maintenance, equipment repairs, professional development etc."

The other question I raised was in relation to the Peel non-profit corporation that was referred to by Mr Kitchin and in the presentation in Sudbury as well. I asked if the parliamentary assistant would report on the status of the non-profit adult education training centres, using Peel as an example. In the answers that were tabled yesterday, the parliamentary assistant said a response would be tabled tomorrow, which I suspect is today, so I'm wondering where it is.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Wildman. There will be some responses tabled by the parliamentary assistant, I'm advised.

Mr Wildman: Thank you.

CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES, LOCAL 2512

The Chair: I'd like to advise members that our next presenter was to be CUPE Local 791. Mr Sutherland, its president, could not be here. The subcommittee has decided to substitute CUPE Local 2512, with Marie O'Brien. Thanks very much, Ms O'Brien. It's nice to see you again. Perhaps you'll present your co-presenter.

Ms Marie O'Brien: Thank you. With me is Duncan Haslam, the national Canadian Union of Public Employees representative for Local 2512.

The Chair: Of course.

Mr Duncan Haslam: I have changed. I thought you wouldn't recognize me.

Ms O'Brien: Thank you for allowing me an opportunity to address our concerns regarding Bill 104, and specifically section 335, the outsourcing of non-instructional services. I am representing CUPE Local 2512, which includes secretaries, clerical workers, educational assistants, youth care workers and technicians of the Waterloo Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board. CUPE Local 2512 recommends withdrawal of section 335 because of its intention within Bill 104 to contract out non-instructional services.

The membership that I represent have had their wages frozen since 1992. The average annual salary for the

secretaries, clerical and technicians is \$22,000, and for the educational assistants \$17,000. This is not out-of-control spending. The services these dedicated people provide are worth the cost. The compensation received for the work performed is only part of the successful careers these people have pursued. Educational support workers have been downsized through budget cuts in recent years but are still expected to do more with less. That is exactly what these employees are doing.

We have also identified areas to the trustees and management that can be restructured for cost savings because, as taxpayers, we also want the best and most effective services for our tax dollars.

There are also other considerations above the wages that contribute to the efficient running of the school boards. For example, technical support staff are familiar with the needs and requirements of each school. A great savings to the schools is that technicians are able to purchase any required materials at wholesale cost rather than paying the markup that a contractor would apply. They are also able to identify and solve technical problems as needed. Will the same standard of knowledge and expertise be available if these positions are contracted out?

School boards are not just creating employment opportunities but are providing the necessary services to operate a school. Many of the programs mandated by the ministry require a considerable amount of training that is not available outside the school board. For example, the elementary student system is a computer program only used within schools. With a high turnover rate in contract workers, the necessary training would not be cost-effective and the excellence of program maintenance would be compromised.

Another area of concern is for children with special needs. It is critical for these students to have the consistency of working with an educational assistant and other support workers who are dependable, well trained and committed to providing caring services. For students who do not adapt easily to change, it is important that they have the reassurance and presence of a familiar educational assistant, one with whom they have an ongoing relationship. To have an unstable workforce dealing with these children will be detrimental to the child's development.

School secretaries at both the elementary and secondary levels do more than paperwork. They are often the first contact families have with the schools. They are aware of the family situations, health requirements and other critical needs. Secretaries deal with confidential and sensitive issues in a professional, efficient manner. This is an important and necessary constant for families, teachers and administrators.

Staff at the central board office provide important support and services to the whole system. At this level, people are required to have a thorough knowledge with regard to the Education Act, labour relations and curriculum requirements, for example. Administrators and teachers rely on staff to respond to their inquiries and requests and to have the correct information required.

The average length of service of our membership is 10 years, which confirms that there is a low turnover rate.

This is one of many factors required for a stable school setting. Students know and trust their school secretaries, educational assistants and library technicians. Our members are an integral part of the school community that contributes to a safe, nurturing environment for the students. They have a high affiliation to their schools by being involved in fund-raising, being members of the school councils and assisting with many extracurricular activities on their own time. Due to this involvement, non-instructional employees are able to develop beneficial relationships with parents, students, teachers and administrators. This would not be the case if these positions were to be contracted out. If people do not feel the connection to the community that they are serving, they will not be as willing to volunteer their time.

If there are inefficiencies within the system, then they should be correctly identified and dealt with. There must be more equitable solutions available than to destroy the employment base of the vital support service in the education sector. Our greatest concern lies within the social justice issue of outsourcing positions. We feel it is far better to be employed by a not-for-profit employer than to be employed by someone whose primary concern is bottom-line profit.

Furthermore, we believe that people have the fundamental right to earn a living in order to feed, clothe and shelter their families and plan for their future. The most effective anti-poverty remedy today is a secure job. We cannot afford to allow the current damaging level of unemployment to become a permanent feature of Ontario's economy. Privatization will be counterproductive. Do not cut our positions as a result of using narrow-focus criteria. The benefits to our membership, our families and community of having steady employment include being productive individuals in the workplace, in our homes and in our communities. The support our members provide will result in the taxpayers of tomorrow having a promising future.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms O'Brien. We have approximately two minutes per caucus. We begin with the Conservative caucus.

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Mr Froese: I asked my question last time.

The Chair: All right. Is the Conservative caucus waiving their question time?

Mr Young: We'll waive our time.

The Chair: The official opposition, Mrs McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much. Among a number of areas that I would like to ask you about, I think I'm going to focus on the educational assistants and your relationship with educational assistants to meeting the needs of special needs students, because I am struck. I knew that the average salary for non-teaching staff tended to be about \$24,000. You've indicated that the salary for an educational assistant in the board is \$17,000.

I know that in the ministry's assumptions about where they're going to save the \$150 million in amalgamation, they need to take — I can't believe they need to do this, but they've shown that they want to do it — \$1.3 million directly out of educational supports, educational assistants. I guess you can save an awful lot of educational assistants' salaries, if they're only \$17,000, by cutting \$1.3 million.

I guess I'm concerned about the kind of choices that boards are going to face. The dollars are going to be tight. They're going to be faced with the costs of harmonization of services, and which programs they're going to let go and which they'll keep. If they can cut the educational assistants and put the special needs kids into a segregated class and save that \$17,000 salary for that one child, is that the choice you think they're going to make?

Ms O'Brien: I hope not, because I also believe in the integration of children. What happened in our board this year is yes, they did cut back on the educational assistants. Before, we had half-time positions and full-time positions. They have now cut those jobs into little bitty pieces. We have people travelling to up to three schools in a day to put in a full day's work. So that's what happened with us.

Mrs Boyd: Thank you very much for your presentation. It certainly very clearly pointed out the view that you have of both the importance of the work that you do within the schools, but also the fact that it's very cost-effective. I think for a lot of people, particularly among the public, the claims of this government that all these positions are what is costing so much money is based on very little information about what the actual wages are and how few people, relatively speaking, are engaged in these kinds of activities for the amount of work to be done in most boards. Would you agree that's the case, that vast numbers of the public, until this whole thing arose, had very little idea of what you did or of what you made?

Ms O'Brien: That's correct. I think they're under the assumption that we have a yearly salary, but the majority of us are only paid 40 or 41 weeks per year, and that's it. It's not 52.

Mrs Boyd: And then you're laid off.

Ms O'Brien: That's correct.

Mrs Boyd: I see. I didn't know that, so that's very interesting. That would be the educational assistants, laid off obviously because school isn't year-round. Then you're not required. That wouldn't be true for some of the other members of your local, I assume, who are caretakers and secretaries, or are they also laid off?

Ms O'Brien: Well, the caretakers aren't part of our local. They do work year-round, but we have maybe less than 15 people who work year-round right now.

Mrs Boyd: Really. I had no idea of that, so you are educating us as well. I know that when the local unions in London did a lot of work in the malls, talking to citizens about what was going on and showing them what their jobs were, there were an awful lot of people — I've received over 6,000 signatures from one of the locals and about 3,000 from another, pointing out what they actually do. They certainly have the support of the citizens once people understand what the members of your union actually do.

Ms O'Brien: Yes, I've also found that, that it's a matter of educating the public and once they really, truly realize what is involved right now and what it looks like in the future, we've had their support.

Mrs Boyd: We've taken you for granted. I'm sorry about that.

The Chair: Ms O'Brien, Mr Haslam, I want to thank you very much on behalf of the committee for your presentation and for stepping in on such short notice to present it to us.

BRANT COUNTY ROMAN CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD

The Chair: May I have the Brant County Roman Catholic Separate School Board, Larry Kings, Brendan Ryan. Welcome, Chairman Kings, Mr Ryan.

Mr Larry Kings: Good evening, committee members. My name is Larry Kings. I'm the chairperson of the Brant County Roman Catholic Separate School Board. I want to thank you on behalf of the board for providing us with this opportunity to make some comments on Bill 104.

I must say that as a person who was educated in the system and who has children who went through the system, I had mixed feelings when I heard the school boards were going to be amalgamated. However, we must look past our personal preferences and experiences, so at this time, I join with my colleagues in the board in expressing support for the principles behind Bill 104. We still believe the legislation needs some clarification and additions, and at this time I would call on Brendan Ryan, the director of education, to make our presentation to the committee on behalf of the board.

Mr Brendan Ryan: Madam Chair, committee members, we do appreciate the opportunity of coming here. We just got notice on Friday that we were on the list and so we put together something rather quickly. I would say that the green cover has got nothing to do with the name Ryan or the fact we're just a week away from St Patrick's Day. It just happened to be what was available at the time.

We welcome this opportunity to make a presentation to the standing committee on social development on behalf of the Brant County Roman Catholic Separate School Board. Bill 104 is perhaps one of the most significant pieces of legislation in the past 50 years in the field of education and its impact and ramifications will be felt in all aspects of education for a considerable time into the future.

Because it is so significant a bill and because it so radically alters the landscape, it is important that the bill should address all of the contentious issues in education. Once this bill becomes law, the impetus for further change will diminish.

When the first talk of restructuring began in the previous government, the board was not in favour of the proposed changes. In taking that position, the board was looking back to a solid record of achievement since county boards were formed in 1969. Since the formation of county boards, the Brant County Roman Catholic Separate School Board had shown a steady pattern of growth in population. It also had a record of expansion of facilities and an enviable record of cooperation with our coterminal board and with other public bodies.

A good example of this sharing can be seen in the Notre Dame/Branlyn school which was built in 1988 where both boards of education and the city of Brantford

got together to ensure that a rapidly growing community had appropriate education and recreation facilities provided to meet its needs all under one roof. It was from this background that the board viewed the proposed changes. Much had been achieved and there was no guarantee that change would improve the situation for the students in Brant county.

Perhaps the one single item that influenced the board into taking a more positive stand towards Bill 104 is the statement by the minister, the Honourable John Snobelen, on the issue of financing. For many years we have seen funding inequities in education throughout Ontario, and certainly separate school boards were very familiar with these inequities. But the discrepancies in funding went beyond separate school boards to public boards with low assessment bases. The proposal that all children would have access to equal funding was a concept that was and remains attractive to the trustees of the Brant County Roman Catholic Separate School Board. We see it as a fundamentally equitable proposal that a child in Moonsee should have the same funding rights that a child in Brampton has and we support a funding model that would enable this to happen.

On several occasions we've heard the minister state that this principle of equity, together with the concept of savings, is what is driving the reform in education. He has said that the government will stand by its promises and, if given a chance, will arrive at this position. We believe him, and so we have come to support the concept behind Bill 104. In doing so, we want to make it clear that we do not agree to any diminution of our constitutional rights and that while the proposed funding model would not envision separate school boards raising taxes, this right is merely being suspended and not vacated. If indeed the proposed financial reform does not bring about equity, separate school boards reserve their rights as they are currently enjoyed.

Bill 104 is a historic document in that it proposes that French-language boards should govern their own education concerns in the province. This is a milestone that the French community in Ontario has sought for many years and we congratulate the government on this step. However, governance without adequate funding is a hollow victory and we'd ask that additional startup funding be made available to French-language boards in order to help them become established. Many of the French-language boards cover large geographic areas and, unlike their English-language counterparts, there is no infrastructure in place to ensure that the needs of diverse communities are met. For these reasons, we believe that additional funds should be made available to allow the boards an opportunity to do the necessary research and planning to successfully launch this new system.

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It has been said that it was an accident of history and emigration patterns prior to Confederation that allowed separate school boards to enjoy a particular constitutional recognition. Be that as it may, separate school boards do enjoy this right and have used it well to benefit both the Catholic community and the society in general since Confederation.

The Brant County Roman Catholic Separate School Board, while cherishing its constitutional rights to provide Catholic education, also supports the Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association position that consideration be given to other groups to enjoy educational funding and would encourage the government to re-examine this question in light of the major structural changes that are now being implemented.

The reconfiguration of boards across the province has produced some partnerships that have as many differences as they have commonalities. While it is relatively easy to say that we will have elections in November 1997 and the new boards will assume authority on January 1, 1998, it must be recognized that there are many difficulties that the new boards will face. These will include surplus staff in some areas, harmonization of collective agreements, considerable work in bringing policies and practices into line, and ensuring that students throughout the new jurisdictions will have equal access to technology and other programs. In addition, some boards will enter into new partnerships with considerable debt load in debentures for new buildings or liabilities for gratuities, while other boards will be relatively unencumbered.

The potential for friction is considerable in some of these situations, and while we do not propose that the government should assume all of the liabilities or additional costs, it would be prudent to make some financial provisions so that the new boards can embark on their duties with a sense of financial stability and a minimum of concern that collective agreements can be harmonized.

Over the years, the duties and responsibilities of various groups within the education family had become pretty clear. While they may have differed from one jurisdiction to another, each board had worked out a *modus vivendi* to meet its needs. The substantial reduction in the number of trustees will obviously change the role of the trustee, and the new element in the equation is school councils. Our board is fully supportive of the notion of school councils, but we believe it is important that there be a clear definition of the roles of trustees, administration, school councils and principals in the new organizational structure. A failure to do this will produce a sense of ambiguity and will lead to unnecessary conflicts.

Perhaps one of the most contentious items in the proposed new structure has been the subject of outsourcing. While it is never specifically mentioned, the continual talk of massive savings because of restructuring has created an atmosphere of apprehension in support staff in school boards. The Brant County Roman Catholic Separate School Board has always believed that cooperation between bodies to deliver services at an economical rate is desirable. In fact, we've shared services with a number of organizations to ensure that an affordable level of service could be maintained. We believe that this practice could continue and that new opportunities for partnerships and cooperatives should be explored. By doing this, we believe we will meet the minister's wish that the maximum number of dollars be spent in the classroom.

We would, however, have real concerns if support services to our students were delivered by agencies who

pay their workers minimum wage and no benefits. There is dignity in work and employees deserve a just wage. We believe it would be antithetical to the whole concept of Christian education if we were to exploit workers in order to provide services for students. This type of situation would send a strange message to our students regarding the value of work and the dignity of the worker.

Junior kindergarten is a topic that has produced more heat than light in discussion over the past decade. The fact of the matter is that most industrialized countries view education as being an important part of their industrial strategy. Most countries also subscribe to the notion that the early years are the most important in a child's development and that positive experiences in these early years will set a pattern for success in life. We would ask that junior kindergarten be viewed in this light, not as a glorified babysitting experience but as an opportunity to provide a solid foundation for future success. In that sense, the program should be funded to encourage boards to provide this enriching experience for their students and not receive a reduced level of funding which suggests that we're apologizing for offering the program.

If we have learned anything from examining our educational system, it is that the system cannot exist in a vacuum. We must be part of the community; we must use community resources to enrich the education of the students. While not everyone will subscribe to the belief that it takes a village to raise a child, we must be open to the notion that schools cannot exist as discrete enclaves. In past years, the Ministry of Education and Training has provided funds for such projects as co-operative education, ties to business and industry and TIPP's. This board has participated in all of these projects and so has enlarged the canvas of educational opportunity for the students. We would urge that the Ministry of Education and Training allocate funds that can be accessible, on application, for future endeavours. At the moment, our board is involved, as an example, with the Brantford Police Services Board in projects such as a resource officer in our secondary schools, and we're looking for a program in our elementary schools.

These types of programs add materially to the students' experience and we should look to enlarging our contacts with the community in these and other areas. It would be foolish to imagine that other agencies will fund these programs totally, and so boards which are working with innovative programs such as these should have an opportunity to apply for special grants for approved programs.

In closing, the Brant County Roman Catholic Separate School Board is appreciative of the opportunity to make this presentation. We have a long history of providing Catholic education to our students and we're proud of our successes. We welcome the change if it gives our students the opportunities to enjoy equal access to resources with every other student in the province. Our partnership with Haldimand-Norfolk Roman Catholic Separate School Board is one we look forward to. We regard these as historic times in education and hope that the new structure will permit us to continue our contribution to this community and province.

We rely on the promises of the government to provide this more equitable funding structure. We ask them to seriously consider the points that we've raised and, in return, promise full cooperation as we move into the future. And so, in the interests of our students and students across the province, this board endorses the basic philosophy of Bill 104 of equity for all students in this great province.

The Chair: Chairman Kings, Mr Ryan, thank you on behalf of the committee for your attendance and your presentation here this evening. Unfortunately, there is no time for questions.

BOARD OF EDUCATION FOR THE CITY OF LONDON

The Chair: Our last presenter, but by no means the least, is the London board of education, John Laughlin, Alex Sutherland, and a few more. Might I ask you to introduce yourselves for the record. You then will have 15 minutes to make your presentation.

Mrs Heather Wice: I'm Heather Wice and I'm chairperson of the board. I'm joined by Alex Sutherland, the vice-chairperson of the board; John Laughlin, the director of education; and Don Scanlon, executive assistant with our board, who has been very helpful in helping us put our presentation together.

First of all, I would like to thank you very sincerely for providing this opportunity for us to speak with you. We were not on the original list and we recognize that it was through some hard work of some people I suspect who are sitting in this room, as well as back in London, that you were able to add us to the list. At the risk of sounding self-serving, we'd like to say that being the last speaker, we appreciate that and we think you have saved the best for last.

I very specifically would like to thank Tonia Grannum and Nicole in your office, because as the support people for your committee, they have been tremendously helpful in answering and responding to our concerns and questions, and I would like to acknowledge them for that.

We're not going to read our presentation to you this evening. You've been here for a long day and a long week. What we would like to do is just highlight our presentation for you.

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We believe we are in a somewhat unique position because London-Middlesex in the past had been asked to voluntarily explore the concept of an amalgamation. I believe we may in fact be able to provide you with some information that will prove to be useful in the discussions you are going to have around Bill 104. We are offering to you our experience.

The three of us are going to be presenting some of the different components of our presentation. Mr Laughlin will be presenting some issues around the introduction, Mr Sutherland will be talking to you about some concerns we have around the funding model and then I'll be speaking to you at the end.

I would encourage you to take the opportunity to read through our presentation. We've spent a tremendous amount of time in doing that. We think we do have some

things we'd like to suggest and we would encourage you to take the time.

Mr John Laughlin: Again, echoing the chair's comments, it's a pleasure to be here. We appreciate the opportunity to present. I'm just going to make some key points in the introductory section and the historical perspective.

Essentially the first point I'd like to make is that historically the London board of education has embraced the concept of change enthusiastically, particularly when any change is based on exemplary practice and sound research and when the data demonstrate that the contemplated change will positively affect student outcomes. Those are the two key points I want to make in that section.

I want to continue by indicating that the board is fundamentally opposed to many of the principles inherent in Bill 104 and to some of the legislative regulations we expect will quickly follow.

A couple of key points I want to make there are:

One, we're concerned that the bill is intrusive and lacks substance, particularly in terms of an operational plan, a business plan and a human resources plan. While we know many of those plans will in fact follow, we're concerned that we have not seen the entire picture. We're concerned also that it centralizes control and significantly reduces local autonomy and, finally, that it mandates time lines that significantly curtail local impact and limit collaborative implementation.

Having said that, and while we are concerned about the intrusiveness of the bill, we are working towards making it work. We have developed a steering committee among the four boards. We are working both at the director level and at the political level by sharing data. We have collected an inordinate amount of data that demonstrate how we are common and how we are unique. As Heather alluded, we will be the third-largest public board in Ontario and we want to make sure that the innovative program models that presently exist within the county boards and the urban boards continue to be offered in the most cost-efficient manner.

Related to that, let me just share briefly with you some facts and figures. I've heard some of the presentations already tonight and I want to share some facts and figures from a budgetary perspective that are from the minister's office. We would like to present that information and provide the local London flavour.

It's our contention that the Board of Education for the City of London has demonstrated a high degree of fiscal responsibility while continuing to provide a spectrum of program delivery that far exceeds the range offered by other boards. If you look at the chart under 2.0 you can see — and these are figures released by the minister's office in February — that the expenditure per pupil in London is \$6,571; the provincial average is \$6,682.

But I think the next two boxes probably make the point I really want to emphasize. When you look at direct classroom and classroom support — and we see that as the classroom, the supports that go towards the classroom, and I'm talking about custodial, maintenance, secretarial, in-school administration, library resource centres, special education support, psychologists, psycho-

metrists, speech and language pathologists. Those are the essential supports, not the luxurious supports, that go together to make what we call the classroom. When you look at direct classroom and classroom support, 86.5% of the in excess of \$300-million budget in London goes towards direct classroom and classroom support. That again is above the provincial average of 84.8%.

When you look at supervision and administration, we have been fiscally responsible. Only 13.5% of that budget is directed towards supervision and administration, with the provincial average being 15.6%. One last statistic: Of that 13.5%, last year 2.4% was spent on governance and central administration. We expect that figure to be in the 2% range this budget year, again well below the provincial average of approximately 3.3%.

There are a couple of other points that I think have to be made. The 1.8% reduction in provincial grants announced last year, when annualized, results in a \$17.1-million reduction for the London board that we must absorb in this year's budgets. Those budgets have to be absorbed while we continue to believe that we need a junior kindergarten program. We have passed a motion that would support junior kindergarten for the next year because we believe in early intervention. We believe that \$1 spent now saves \$6 or \$7 in the future. We believe that adult education is important. We believe in the lifelong learning process.

The second-last point I would like to make is that we also have heard a lot of discussion about transportation. We recently approved a common school calendar, along with additional cooperative savings in 1997, which will result in a combined saving of over \$1 million annually for the London and Middlesex public and separate boards of education. Those savings are there. We don't know at this point in time how we can get any more savings from the transportation area given the block funding that we're now living with.

Finally I'd like to make the point again that I have made already: The classroom is an extension of all those supports that I alluded to earlier. We believe that all those individuals work as a unified team and are essential prerequisites to ensure the continued quality education we have come to enjoy in London and all across Ontario.

Mr Alex Sutherland: Realizing that the funding model will be released later this spring, I will only hit on a few items verbally and ask you to refer to section 3 for any additional information.

In that section we say that the service that the public school boards provide for all students must be recognized and acknowledged. Presently this does not occur. Our boards offer a significantly broader range of programs and services than the coterminous board, yet both boards receive the same level of per pupil funding towards special education.

As it relates to funding also, statements made by the Ministry of Education and Training related to expenditures and revenues of boards are not always accurate when applied to local boards. I reference the comments made by our director, Mr Laughlin, as it relates to a 2% cut in education equated to an 11.7% cut for the London board of education.

Focus on students and the impact on the classroom: The present position of the government is contrary to the

recommendations contained in the 1995 Report of the Royal Commission on Learning: For the Love of Learning. The province must provide direct financial support to district school boards to ensure the provision of program equity for all students; for example, JK, co-curricular, spec ed, just to mention a few.

I'm going to sum up by suggesting that while we acknowledge the province's desire to maintain its belief in two publicly funded education systems, the province must recognize that trustee representation must reflect ratepayer distribution and support. For example, student enrolment in Ontario is currently 70% public versus 30% separate: 33 boards, 33 boards. I ask you, is that equity?

Mrs Wice: I think it's been mentioned that in the proposed amalgamation of the four area boards, we will be a board that will have almost 90,000 students. That makes us the third-largest in the province. I think it would be interesting for you to note that in the downsized Alberta model of education governance, the three largest boards serve approximately 500,000 students. In Ontario that same 500,000 students will be served by three boards. I think you need to be very aware of the significance in this area. We do, however, believe that trustee representation should be based on electoral representation.

I want to speak to you a little bit about school board roles, responsibilities and representation. While we recognize that it has not been completely announced, other than that I read it this morning in the *Globe and Mail*, communities are going to lose their opportunity to support local priorities and needs by boards losing their opportunity to tax. We're very concerned about the loss of local input into education revenues and expenditures.

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Our concerns remain over the issues of adequate representation and local accountability, and in meeting with our new proposed partners in a steering committee that we've already been very actively working on, I can assure you that for our smaller county partners this is a very significant area of concern. Long-distance availability and community interaction are going to be significantly curtailed, we're concerned, and we think this is an issue that needs to be addressed.

We agree that parental involvement is key to the success of any student, and it's also key for the success of our system. However, it is the role of the trustee to try and act as the person who coordinates what's going on between schools. Appropriately, the role of a school council is to support and expect the best for their students within the school. We see a strong role for both groups in this kind of organization and we're very concerned about the loss of that coordination.

Bill 104, frankly, is most unsettling for what it doesn't say. It's been indicated there's no human resource plan, no operational plan and no transition plan. We believe it's very important that those decisions and some of that information first of all are decided locally, but that some of those things happen fairly quickly.

The Education Improvement Commission has been given sweeping powers. We believe the role of the Education Improvement Commission would be best served by being an overseeing body, a coordinating body, a facilitator for positive change. Accountable only to the

government? We don't believe that's appropriate. Trustees are accountable.

In the spirit of time, because it's important for us — we want to be able to talk with you, not at you — I just want to indicate that certainly in the area of the local improvement commission we see that's a key. We would like to have the opportunity to make some decisions before January 1. We believe the local improvement committee should be trustees locally, making local decisions. We've already worked on some ways that we can involve our community in that decision-making process.

To sum up, we have some recommendations that we've indicated for you. We question the projected savings that have been indicated around the area of outsourcing. We believe that boards should be given some flexibility, and I would encourage you, in any amendments you make, if the bill is not withdrawn, that flexibility is the key to what you do. Local decision-making should remain, and what we'd like to do is provide some opportunities to discuss things with you.

The Chair: Thanks very much, Chair Wice. We've used up all of your time, quite effectively, may I say. We appreciate the fact that you came and presented to us and I'm sure everyone will read this, and certainly it will form part of our official records. Thanks very much.

Mrs Wice: Thank you very much for the opportunity.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair: Members, we have some outstanding matters before we conclude our hearings. The first is a motion by Ms McLeod which was deferred from March 19 and March 20, and I wonder if we might move to the debate of that motion.

Mrs McLeod: Why don't I lead off, Madam Chair? Unless Mr Wildman tells me that some miracle has occurred and the House leaders have found some way of deferring the start of clause-by-clause consideration tomorrow, then I think the motion probably doesn't need to be pursued.

Mr Wildman: As I reported on Thursday, my office contacted the offices of the other two House leaders on Thursday to ask about how we might work out a meeting of the subcommittee or an unofficial meeting of the committee. Mr Bradley's staff was agreeable. The government House leader's staff did not reject the idea, but indicated that they would be in touch with the Conservative members on this committee to get some feedback before they got back to us. I checked with my office today and we haven't heard anything back. Unless the Conservative members can tell us what their discussions were with the government House leader, I don't know what's happening.

Mrs McLeod: My further concern is that I understand that with the time allocation motion being in place the House would have to be sitting in order to alter the time allocation motion, and that if we were to defer on an informal agreement, we could risk losing the chance to do formal clause-by-clause because we would not have met the terms of the time allocation motion; that the possibility of retroactively changing the time allocation

motion might be a little risky even though there is precedent in this government for retroactive legislation.

Mr Wildman: We could have an unofficial meeting tomorrow morning if the government members are agreeable. I just don't know. We haven't heard anything.

Mr Young: The ministry is offering a briefing for all opposition committee members, and if they wanted to bring staff, to review proposed amendments tomorrow at noon. The minister's office will be in contact with their offices tomorrow to confirm a location if they wish to attend.

The Chair: I thank you for that information, Mr Young, but that doesn't speak to the motion Mrs McLeod has tabled. Mr Wildman has asked whether there has been any communication between the House leader and the Conservative members of the committee. Do you have a response?

Mr Young: None that I know of, no.

Mrs McLeod: That'll make it easy. I will withdraw the motion. But in doing so I will again express my dismay at having been on the road for 10 days, hearing presentations for nine to 10 hours a day, and that we must now table our amendments tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock and have only four hours in which to debate all we have heard in the course of the last 10 days.

Mr Wildman: I won't prolong this but I want to register again, as I did at the beginning of our proceeding today, my frustration at the fact that everything that occurred, all the presentations that were given to us today, meant absolutely nothing because we were already working on our amendments, which have to be tabled by 9:00 tomorrow morning so we could debate them for a very short time tomorrow afternoon.

Mr Young: That's not true; that's not true at all. This bill will be going to committee of the whole House next week and there will be another opportunity to bring forth amendments at that time.

Mr Wildman: According to the government time allocation motion, there is one hour for committee of the whole debate. One hour total.

Mrs McLeod: According to the government's time allocation motion, at 5:00 tomorrow afternoon all amendments will be considered to have been placed and will not be debated; they will be put to a vote. That's the end of the discussions.

The Chair: We are aware of the substance of the time allocation motion. You are withdrawing your motion. That disposes of the matter for the time being.

There are two other items. The parliamentary assistant has some responses to questions that have been raised. Have they been distributed? They are about to be distributed to the members of committee.

Mr Young: I want to table Ministry of Education and Training responses to questions posed here in the committee hearings March 17 to 20; and a second set of answers which has been put together fairly quickly the last day or so which says at the top, "Clarification: Ministry's Responses to Questions," as you requested.

The Chair: We are also going to be distributing at this time a list of the outstanding questions I've asked the researcher to prepare, and he very kindly has done it on very short notice. Bear in mind that this is a draft. There may be some overlap with what the parliamentary

assistant has presented, but the fact remains that there are an awful lot of outstanding questions which remain.

Mr Wildman: Most of my questions are outstanding: the ones that haven't been answered.

The Chair: Mr Wildman, if you would let me conclude, please, if you'll let me proceed, I'm particularly concerned about the fact that we have some 11 questions that were posed during this week. There are another 11 that were posed today, but what's even more troubling is that we have three questions that are outstanding as of March 17 and yet another from February 27 which have not been responded to. As I say, there may be some that will have been responded to by the parliamentary assistant, but it doesn't begin to answer what appear to be some 27 outstanding questions.

I must express my extreme consternation: I had asked the ministry to ensure that by the end of the hearings we would have answers to all the questions that were raised, with the few exceptions where we asked for information as of 1 o'clock tomorrow, bearing in mind that the questions were asked very late in the day today. It is quite frustrating, I'm sure, for all committee members to go to clause-by-clause tomorrow without all of the information that was requested. Again I want to express the consternation of the Chair on that point.

Mr Young: Madam Chair, I want to say for the record that there is no effort to filibuster or obfuscate the answering of questions. The staff are working as we speak to answer questions. They are doing the best they can, and as soon as they are available, will make them available to committee members, if not in their office this evening, first thing in the morning.

The Chair: Mr Young, nobody was accusing anybody of filibustering. I was simply expressing for the record that there are some questions that have been outstanding for a very long time and I had asked that the answers be provided by the end of the hearings; they were not. That is an objective fact.

I don't know that we need any further discussion on the point. Is this a different point, Mrs McLeod?

Mrs McLeod: I will not get into a debate about the adequacy of the answers, although they certainly don't address the questions. Nevertheless there is a number and an answer beside the number. But when it comes to the question on adult literacy, adult literacy costs, that was to have been tabled today according to the responses we got yesterday, and I am just wondering if that is here.

The Chair: We've not had an opportunity to cross-check the responses, Mrs McLeod, to answer your question. A cursory glance revealed that it was not, but it may very well be there. We'll just have to review that overnight.

Mrs McLeod: It doesn't appear to be there and it was to have been tabled today.

The Chair: All right.

Mr Wildman: Just for the record, Chair, I appreciate the work that the staff has been doing and how much work they've been doing. I just commiserate with the ministry staff that the government's short time frame makes it imperative for them to do all this work in such a short time. If we had a more reasonable approach to this legislation, they would have had more time to work on this.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair —

The Chair: Mrs McLeod, is this a new point?

Mrs McLeod: Yes, and it's a summation of the last 10 days. The reason there are not answers to a majority of the questions, even when there is something provided in writing, is exactly what the presenters have been saying over and over: There is no plan; it has not been developed. There are no answers because no decisions have been made. All we have is one part of this puzzle.

Mr Young: Madam Chair, I'd like to comment on that.

The Chair: Mr Duncan is next, I believe.

Mr Duncan: In the response to my question that was placed today — thank you to the ministry — they indicate that the ministry does not normally collect mill rate data. I am given to understand that in fact you do and that you haven't for 1996; you've acknowledged that. I am given to understand that it's available historically as well, so I would ask the ministry to recheck that tomorrow morning prior to clause-by-clause.

Mr Wildman: The ministry does collect them.

Mr Duncan: They say here they don't.

The Chair: Mr Young, did you want to add anything?

Mr Young: No.

The Chair: All right. It appears from the list of outstanding questions, just for information, that the last one on the first page, and the first and second ones on the second page, and the last one on the last page have been answered by the ministry. The rest are outstanding.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the presenters who have come before us and all those who have tried and have not made it. We have held hearings now for 10 days in a number of cities. For the record, people should know that we have had 1,465 requests from people and organizations that wanted to appear. We have been able to hear about 200 by working very long days and allowing 15 and 10 minutes a stretch. It is not very much, but it was the best we could do. We were working under time constraints. We could not go beyond the 10 days pursuant to a time allocation motion that was brought in by the government.

Let me also express my gratitude —

Mr Young: Cheap shot.

The Chair: No, I'm sorry, that's an objective fact. There was a time allocation motion, Mr Young.

May I also express my gratitude to this facility that hosted us today. They have done a wonderful job and we thank them very much. It's the kind of thing I think we should do more often, being in community centres. It's been a great experience for us.

Finally, I want to thank the ministry staff. I know they've been working very hard, and as has been said here before, they have done all they've been able to do given the time lines they've had to work within.

I also want to thank our clerk, our researcher and our technical staff. They have done a phenomenal job in getting us everywhere, from Toronto to Thunder Bay and back here to Brantford.

We are adjourned for this session. We will meet tomorrow at 1 o'clock for clause-by-clause. Thank you to all of you.

The committee adjourned at 2035.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma ND)

Substitutions present / Membres remplaçants présents:

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne PC)

Mr Ron Johnson (Brantford PC)

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North / -Nord PC)

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre / -Centre PC)

Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes:

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River ND)

Clerk / Greffière: Ms Tonia Grannum

Staff / Personnel: Mr Ted Glenn, research officer, Legislative Research Service

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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Wednesday 26 March 1997

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mercredi 26 mars 1997

Standing committee on social development

Fewer School
Boards Act, 1997

Comité permanent des affaires sociales

Loi de 1997 réduisant
le nombre de conseils scolaires



Chair: Annamarie Castrilli
Clerk: Tonia Grannum

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Wednesday 26 March 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES
AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Mercredi 26 mars 1997

The committee met at 1305 in room 151.

FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 RÉDUISANT
LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Consideration of Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / *Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système, en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.*

The Chair (Ms Annamarie Castrilli): Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to our committee hearings. As we start, I'd like to run through the purpose for our being here.

Pursuant to the government's time allocation motion, we held public hearings Monday through Thursday the week of March 17, 1997, and Monday, March 24, 1997, and Tuesday, March 25, 1997. Today we are here to consider the bill for clause-by-clause consideration and we will continue until we complete the clause-by-clause.

All proposed amendments, according to the motion, should have been filed with the clerk of the committee by 9 o'clock this morning, and at 5 o'clock this afternoon those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved and I as Chair "shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any divisions required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 128(a)." Further pursuant to the time allocation motion, one hour shall be allotted to consideration of the bill in committee of the whole House and one sessional day allotted to the third reading stage of the bill.

Without further ado, we'll begin with —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Madam Chair: I just wanted to raise a point of order with

regard to the procedure. When there is a decision to remove a section or subsection, whether it be a government recommendation or an opposition recommendation, often we find that legislative counsel will prepare an amendment which is a motion to delete. I would like you to rule on whether a motion to delete is in order. In my view it is not. If members of the committee wish to defeat a section or a subsection, they simply vote against it and therefore the vote is negative and the section is thus deleted.

The Chair: Any other points to be made on that point of order? Mr Wildman, it's my understanding that certainly a motion to delete a section is not in order but a motion to delete a subsection can be in order.

Interjection: Can be?

The Chair: Is in order.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Just to ask for clarification on that, you said that a motion to delete a subsection can be in order —

The Chair: It is in order.

Ms Lankin: It is in order in all circumstances?

The Chair: It is in order. That's correct. Very well. We therefore begin with —

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Chair, very briefly, can I make an assumption that there are no further answers to outstanding questions to be tabled before we begin?

The Chair: Mr Skarica, do you want to respond to that?

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): It's my understanding that the remaining answers to your questions have been prepared and they're on the way over.

The Chair: You have before you a list of the outstanding questions prepared by our researcher. There are a total of some 20 questions. It's actually only about 16 that are outstanding because there are four that the ministry provided responses for yesterday. The rest Mr Skarica says are forthcoming.

Mr Skarica: The minute I get them, I'll table them.

The Chair: Let me again express for the record the disappointment of the Chair that the answers were not given in a timely fashion for the committee to be able to consider them in an appropriate time.

Mr Skarica: If I might add to that, most of the answers outstanding are from March 25 — not all, but most.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): If I can add to that, one of the questions had been posed the week before and not properly answered.

The Chair: In point of fact, there were a number of questions that were re-asked yesterday because the members did not feel they were given a satisfactory

answer. I've already expressed my disappointment with the fact that the information was not provided in a timely fashion.

We begin with Bill 104, section 1. Any amendments to section 1?

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, are you calling the motions in the order in which they have been placed, and do you want us simply then to follow the sequence as the clerk has presented them?

The Chair: That's what I propose.

Mrs McLeod: Then probably the first motion is a Liberal motion which I am sure is going to be ruled not in order, because it is a motion in which we recommend voting against the entire bill. I will withdraw the motion if it's not in order, but I think it's important to begin clause-by-clause hearings with a reiteration of our position that this bill should not be before either this committee or the Legislature, that it has not been given careful consideration, that it has not had full consultation with people affected, and that it is being rammed through the Legislature in a totally inappropriate way.

Mr Wildman: My friend from Fort William is correct: It's not in order. But in our view neither is the bill, so we agree with the motion's intent even if it isn't in order. We believe the government should be withdrawing Bill 104.

Mr Skarica: We've had 10 days of hearings, and by my calculations we've heard from anywhere from 350 to 400 witnesses. I dispute the fact that there has not been consultation.

The Chair: Thank you for your interventions. As Mrs McLeod has rightly pointed out, the amendment is out of order and therefore we move on to the next motion.

Mrs McLeod: The second motion is also a Liberal motion.

I move that clause 1(d) of the bill be amended by striking out "1997" in the second line and substituting "2000."

There will be a number of amendments that we've placed which effectively would ensure that existing municipal elections would continue to elect existing school boards for 1997 and that any amalgamation of boards would be introduced for the voting year 2000. We have heard over and over again almost from every presenter that this is being done in much too hurried a fashion, that the bill that is actually before us gives very few specifics. Nobody knows exactly what the board boundaries are going to look like, nobody knows exactly how the harmonization issues are going to be dealt with, and it is indeed only one piece of a puzzle because we have no idea what all of the concomitant funding is going to bring.

The only way to make sanity of this whole thing — I think of the presentation yesterday where they said, "Take the time to do it right." The only way to do that is if we not have this bill come into effect for 1997. If we recognize that the government is going to move towards change and provide the period of time which coincides with the period of time that's been given to the EIC to operate, to actually bring these new boards into existence, then I think the amalgamation could be carried out in a way which is thoughtful and in which all of the concerns

can be adequately addressed. But it can't be done for the electoral year 1997.

Mr Wildman: I support the motion. Many of the government members on the committee and the minister have pointed to the fact that there have been amalgamations of school boards and a downsizing of the total number of school boards in other jurisdictions as a reason for Ontario following this same path. In saying that, they've ignored the fact that in those other jurisdictions there was a far longer period of time taken to complete the task. In British Columbia, for instance, it took three years to amalgamate a smaller number of boards; it was done in a consultative, proper way to ensure that all those involved were consulted in a way that would make it as smooth a change as possible. Even some of the very small minority of presenters who supported Bill 104 asked for it to be delayed. Many of them asked for it to be delayed for one year.

It seems reasonable that we should be saying if we're going to amend the legislation, going to amalgamate boards in Ontario, that we have it in place for the next municipal election, not this fall's municipal election. The time frame is far too short to deal with the serious concerns about administrative changes, merging collective agreements, seniority lists, dealing with assets and liabilities of various boards, dealing with new collective agreements, all those things. We have now only about eight months. It is impossible for this to be done in a way that is not going to cause serious disruption in January 1998, so I would support the amendment.

Ms Lankin: I won't repeat the arguments of my colleague. I am in support of the amendment. I just wanted to add an additional caution and concern about the timing as is proposed in the bill. Certainly we know that the Education Improvement Commission will be meeting with boards across the province and continuing discussions about the appropriateness of boundaries that have been proposed, and as we have heard during the course of the hearings, there are a number of areas in which alternative proposals have been put forward. I have even heard some sympathetic murmurings from government members with respect to some changes in those proposed boundaries.

I put it to you that this work needs to be undertaken and needs to be done in a way that is thoughtful, and then proceeded with, but it is unlikely that it can be done in a time frame that will give people adequate notice to be able to file the nomination papers for running for school boards, to run for a fall election. The government has moved with great haste to get this legislation in place by the beginning of April, which is the extended deadline put in place for candidates to register for the fall municipal elections. I put it to you that as of April 1, they won't know what boards they are in fact running for, that process is ongoing. This is being moved forward in a very hasty way, in a way which is not good governance, and I would urge the government members to give serious consideration to supporting this amendment.

Mr Skarica: We have heard there are substantial savings, sometimes referred to as only 1%, but still substantial savings of \$150 million per year available once amalgamation does take place. Accordingly, to delay

the matter to the year 2000 deprives the system of that money that can be used in the classroom as opposed to for administration and those types of things.

Mr Duncan: We don't believe your numbers, and we believe that you have deliberately engaged in a disinformation campaign. Let's take, for instance, the numbers we've talked about with respect to expenditure increases. You didn't take into consideration, when the minister was giving his speech, the consumer price index, a very simple calculation, for 10 years. That's one aspect, and we'll predict today that what you're going to do the way you're doing this is not only will you not save as much money; the capital costs associated with the changes are going to be that much higher.

Remember what Wells and Bourns said, that the cost of amalgamating at the upstart is high. Our projection is that if you don't take your time and do it right, not only are you not going to realize the full savings, which we believe you've exaggerated, but you're going to create chaos and you're going to be back in the Legislature trying to fix the mess you're creating. So to suggest somehow that you have to have this done by this year in terms of the school boards, in dealing with this amendment specifically, we think is just wrong. Not only are you affecting your ability to save money; we think you're going to create chaos that's going to cost us more money.

Mrs McLeod: I have to respond to Mr Skarica's reason for wanting to move ahead in 1997, because his answer flies in the face of the presentations that we've heard over the course of the 10 days of consultation. We have heard presentations from the Royal Commission on Learning co-chair, Gerald Caplan. They did extensive studies on amalgamation and found that there was no evidence anywhere, in any research, in any jurisdiction, that showed that amalgamation would indeed save money.

We had evidence of Brian Bourns, who did the study in Ottawa-Carleton, who had come to the conclusion that it would cost money. We had evidence presented by a number of boards that had done their own calculations on the amalgamation costs and could show individual board by board that it could cost as much as \$3 million to \$5 million, and that was without dealing with the issues of harmonization of contracts or harmonization of services. We had the ministry's own consultant study done by Ernst and Young, which says yes, you may possibly save \$150 million on a \$14-billion budget, but which also said amalgamation may lead to an increase in costs. These are all issues which this government wants to ignore, the fact that you may not only not save money, but it may cost more. The reason the government wants to proceed with this is that it wants the public relations statement that it has reduced the numbers of trustees and it wants control over educational finance and believes it has to do something with boards to achieve that. That's why this bill is here.

Mr Wildman: I agree with Mrs McLeod that even the government's own savings figure is only \$150 million total, which is a little bit more than 1% of the total \$13.5 billion spent on education per annum in Ontario, so I don't accept Mr Skarica's reasoning in that regard. However, I must say that he has been frank in saying that it's about money, because that's what it's about. This bill

is not about education. It's not about anything other than control, the ministry taking centralized control over funding and expenditures and curriculum, particularly over funding and expenditures because, as we have seen, the ministry is coming forward with a new funding formula which will enable the ministry to take between \$1 billion and perhaps \$1.5 billion out of the education system on top of the \$400 million it took out in 1996.

Yes, I can see the reason for the government wanting to do this in a rush. It's to get the money out. It's unfortunate that the government isn't attempting to improve education in the classroom, but rather is simply trying to find money to fund the tax cut.

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Mr Skarica: The opposition is obviously picking and choosing the evidence it wants. Perhaps I could actually quote from some of the presentations we've heard, one, for example, from Renny Maki, who is in the Lakehead Board of Education, which you're familiar with, Mrs McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: He was not representing the board, Mr Skarica. I would correct the record.

Mr Skarica: Well, he's a trustee for that board, who had this to say —

Mr Wildman: The chair of the board didn't agree with him.

The Chair: Order. You will have your turn to respond to that, but Mr Skarica has the floor.

Mr Skarica: He indicated as follows: that his reason for running for a seat was the amount of concern expressed to him about education, particularly about the taxes:

"In Shuniah the education share makes up between 70% and 80% of the total property tax bill. And because of equalization, tax increases over the years have been astronomical compared to those in the city of Thunder Bay. It is little wonder that education quality and the value for tax dollars have been huge issues."

We heard that not only there but in Thunder Bay and Windsor as well, from trustees, those types of comments.

Mr Duncan: You deliberately set up witnesses in every community we travelled to and provided them with false information. We have not been able to find one school board that has raised its mill rate 120% in the last 10 years. You'll recollect the numbers the Middlesex board provided us with.

There has been a deliberate campaign of disinformation. Let me give you an example. One presentation was made by one of your government witnesses yesterday that referenced this document, which we managed to get from legislative research because the government wouldn't provide it. The presentation intimated, based on this, "At a time when jobs that pay well require higher skills levels, almost three million Canadians have very limited reading skills, while another four million have some difficulty with everyday reading tasks," that they don't have those reading tasks because of the failure of our education system. But if you read the paragraph before that, it says clearly and unequivocally that the longer someone has been in our education system the better they do in the job market.

That's yet another example of witnesses who were set up by the government with a campaign of disinformation that has done nothing to improve education, has done nothing to save any money for reinvestment in classrooms.

The Chair: Any further debate on this amendment?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I'd like to put on record a statement I pay great respect to, and I'll just read it to make sure I get it right: "In Canada we spend more per capita, more than most other places in the world. I think it's a question of focus and a question of how we can get the system to do its job the best way possible." That's Bob Rae in the Ottawa Citizen in 1992.

I think there is general agreement that there are savings that must be made in the governance model, and I think that's what this government is trying to do: move forward. We have consulted and all three parties have a position that indicates restructuring of the governance model, and this government has the courage to move forward. That's for the record.

For all the people, it's long overdue. It was tried by the previous government, and I believe it's why David Cooke has taken the great task and the great challenge, not for political reasons but for the very reason that it's the thing that has to be done.

Mr Wildman: It doesn't explain why you have to do it in a rush.

Mr O'Toole: The consultation started with Mr Cooke before that.

The Chair: Before we move to the next amendment, there are just a couple of things. I'd like to remind members to speak to the amendment before us. It will make our tasks a lot easier. For the audience that I notice is standing, I'd like to advise you that we have an overflow room in committee room 1; you'll be able to follow the proceedings on television if you don't wish to stand. It's just down the hall to the right of the doors.

Very well. We move on to the —

Mrs McLeod: Shall we vote?

The Chair: Yes, of course; my apologies.

Seeing no further debate, all in favour of the amendment? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

With that motion, I put it to you, shall section 1 carry? All in favour?

Interjection: Don't we still have more?

The Chair: The third motion actually applies to subsection 2(6) of the bill. It's a typo; it's not 1(6). That is why we're dealing with section 1.

Any further debate on section 1? All in favour? Opposed? Section 1 is carried.

We move now to section 2.

Mrs McLeod: Again, I believe the first amendment on section 2 is a Liberal amendment.

I move that subsection 2(4) of the Education Act, which is where the confusion arises —

Mr Wildman: Point of order: Are we going to deal with these subsection by subsection, in other words, pass the subsections to which there are no amendments?

The Chair: I would prefer to deal with the amendments we have before us, unless members want to go through it subsection by subsection.

Mr Wildman: It doesn't matter to me.

Mrs McLeod: I think we'll have a long afternoon if we vote individually on each subsection, unless there's a proposed change.

Mr Wildman: It's going to be a long afternoon either way.

The Chair: With your indulgence, I prefer to deal with the subsections that are in question pursuant to the amendments.

Mrs McLeod: I move that subsection 2(4) of the Education Act, as set out in subsection 2(6) of the bill, be struck out and the following substituted:

"Constitutional rights and privileges

"(4) This act does not adversely affect any right or privilege guaranteed by section 93 of the Constitution Act, 1867 or by section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, including rights and privileges as they were enjoyed by separate school boards or their supporters under predecessors of this act as they existed immediately before January 13, 1997."

This is clearly a concern of the separate school trustees' association, who felt that protections had been afforded them under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms but that there was a risk of other statutory rights they had previously enjoyed being affected by the change the government had proposed. We would restore the previous wording under the previous act.

Mr Wildman: This is an amendment that was requested that's similar to the amendment I have put forward. It's a request by the Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association. If the government takes the position that there is no intention to adversely affect the constitutional rights enjoyed by Catholic school supporters in Ontario, I don't know why the government would not accept this as a friendly amendment.

Mr O'Toole: Perhaps I could ask the legislative staff to clarify. The current statement has only been extended. It doesn't change any of the current language within the bill before us except by being more specific or definitive with the rights of the separate school board. It says nothing to the French issue. I would ask the legislative staff if this indeed adds something, or is it redundant?

The Chair: Is there a response?

Mr John Tomlinson: Yes, there's a response. The concern of the ministry is that to continue that provision to the extent that it would apply to statutory rights of separate boards, it greatly restricts the ability of the government to recommend changes to things like — one basic change is that they would have a right right now to have an election to existing boards next November. The proposal is that since the new boards are being set up, it makes more sense to have the elections in November to the new boards rather than to the existing boards, which, if the bill is all passed, would be dissolved at the end of the year. That's something that perhaps we couldn't do if we retained the provision that's being proposed at the present time.

1330

Mr O'Toole: It's my understanding that the current language does in fact ensure — I am a separate school supporter, and I want that constitutional right guaranteed.

Mr Tomlinson: The current language of the bill you're talking about, sir?

Mr O'Toole: Yes, does it guarantee that?

Mr Tomlinson: Yes, it does. It guarantees the constitutional rights and it extends them to protect the constitutional rights for French as well.

Mr O'Toole: French as well. Thank you.

Mr Duncan: I think it's important to note, though, the subtle distinction in what the ministry responded; that is, that they are no longer affording the boards the same rights and privileges in statute that were guaranteed prior to this bill. That could become much more significant than we realize, not simply because of, for instance, the election of trustees but in many other instances on matters that pertain to statutes of the province of Ontario. Therefore, as the trustees' association expressed, we see, in my view, a much different Education Act as it applies to separate school boards with respect to provincial statutes.

Mr Wildman: With all due respect to the counsel for the ministry, that's one lawyer's opinion. I'm sure there could be other lawyers who would have different opinions. The fact is that his explanation raises the exact concerns that were raised by the trustees' association and by various separate school boards that appeared before the committee. They are concerned not only about the constitutional rights they enjoy under the Constitution of Canada but also the statutory rights that have been accorded to them and were in effect until January 13.

For one thing, they are concerned that in the future some government — I'm sure not this one — might decide to treat school councils as the governing bodies for schools and that they might then argue that the rights of Catholics under the Constitution are being maintained because school councils for various Catholic schools were being maintained and were the governing bodies, thus removing the requirement to have Catholic school boards, particularly now that under the proposed amended boundaries, all of the boards in the province will be coterminous.

The fact is that the trustees' association has taken the government at its word that the government does not intend to remove the rights of Catholics; therefore, they want it stated overtly in the legislation. If the government doesn't want to state it explicitly in the legislation, one is suspicious that the government may have an ulterior motive.

The Chair: Any further debate? Seeing none, we'll put that amendment to a vote.

All in favour? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

We move to the next amendment, which deals with the same subsection.

Mr Wildman: Since the Liberal amendment was defeated, my amendment would also be defeated.

The Chair: You withdraw it?

Mr Wildman: No, I'm not withdrawing it. I think we should just forget about it.

The Chair: We can either withdraw it or put it to a vote.

Mr Wildman: I don't think we need to go through the ritual of another vote. We see what they're going to do.

The Chair: So you withdraw it?

Mr Wildman: Yes.

The Chair: The next amendment is to subsection 2(7).

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, I had indicated that there are a number of amendments which we have asked legislative counsel to take the trouble to draft, because we really believe this bill should not be implemented until the municipal elections of the year 2000. We have conscientiously gone through the bill and identified all those areas in which the time lines would need to be changed in order to ensure that existing boards could be elected for the 1997 period and that the processes of change which would be needed to carry out a carefully considered process of amalgamation could be put in place for the year 2000.

Given the defeat of the first resolution, I will simply withdraw subsequent amendments that relate to the changing of the dates to the year 2000. Having said that, I must raise one aspect of the continuance of the Education Improvement Commission to the year 2000. I may place that amendment when we come to it later on, because I find it absolutely appalling that as we look towards the year 2000 — and it appears that will be the second election of the new district boards because we're going to be forced to elect new district boards in 1997 — when the second election is being held for the new district boards, the Education Improvement Commission will still be required to monitor the election process.

It seems to me we're getting very close to an analogy with a Third World country which is experiencing its first efforts in democracy when, some three years after the first election of the district boards, we are still going to have an arm's-length, appointed body monitoring and supervising a democratic election in Ontario. I find it absolutely appalling to think that the government is anticipating such chaos between now and the year 2000 that it's still going to need its arm's-length commission to be supervising the second election.

The Chair: Ms McLeod, you're withdrawing amendments 4a and 4b?

Mrs McLeod: I will withdraw that and I will withdraw the next amendment as well.

The Chair: Very well. We move to the next amendment dealing with subsection 2(7).

Mr Skarica: Before we do that, Madam Chair, I have the answers to the last 20 questions and I'll table them at this time.

The Chair: We'll arrange for copies and distribution. I'll also tell members at this time that the summaries of the hearings of this bill are completed and available. I believe all members have been given copies. You should have them in front of you; if not, please advise the clerk.

The next amendment, Mr Wildman?

Mr Wildman: Since you've decided to rule that we can move to strike out subsections, I would move that subsection 1(8) of the Education Act, as set out in subsection 2(7) of the bill, be struck out.

This was a request of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. Their argument is that if school boards are to retain any ability to tax, there must be taxation with representation; we shouldn't be having a residency requirement.

Mr Duncan: I think it needs to be said again that in our view the government is deliberately setting up a situation that's going to create chaos. We heard repeated-

ly from delegations that what can be implemented by 1997 or what can begin to be implemented by 1997 won't come close. I think we're going to see three years of utter chaos. We think these types of amendments, as requested by people in the field, people who are going to deal with the results, are in order and appropriate.

Mrs McLeod: I'm not totally sure what the impact is of simply deleting that subsection, because we already have unanswered questions about what will define a separate school elector subsequent to the —

Mr Wildman: Chair, excuse me. I think it should be sub (8) of the bill, not (7), that the amendment applies to. That's the one that deals with the residency requirement.

The Chair: It's 1(8) of the Education Act.

Mr Wildman: It's 1(8) of the Education Act and 2(8) of the bill, not 2(7).

Mr Duncan: It's 2(7) of this bill; 1(8) of the Education Act. The bold numbers reflect it. There is no 2(8) of this bill.

The Chair: It is 2(7), Mr Wildman.

1340

Mr Wildman: But there are two sevens in here. Which one are we dealing with?

The Chair: Yes, because one is the rewording. The clerk will assist you, Mr Wildman. Any further debate on this amendment?

Mr Wildman: If you look at the last part of (8), it says, "a person is not qualified to vote for a member of a district school board or school authority for an area unless the person resides in the area at some time during the qualification period." I'm trying to remove that residency requirement. That's the purpose of the amendment.

The Chair: Any further debate? Are we ready to put it to a vote?

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): Why would you not want them to have some residency somewhere along during that year?

Mr Wildman: The Ontario Public School Boards' Association made this request. They read this to mean principal residence. In other words, if someone owns a cottage in your riding but lives in Toronto, they would not be able to vote. They don't think that's proper; that would be taxation without representation.

Mr Skarica: The reason that is in there is because there will no longer be taxation so there's really no need for a residency requirement any longer.

Mr Wildman: If your argument is that there is no taxation, that the provincial government is going to cover all the costs of education through grants, that of course does not relate to commercial-industrial, but to use the example I was talking about, that's fine. If that's the case, why do you need this in there at all? Why do you need a reference to a residency requirement if there's no question about that, no concern about it?

The Chair: Any further debate? All those in favour of the amendment? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

Any further amendments to that subsection?

Mrs McLeod: On subsection 2(7) still, Madam Chair, I will withdraw the next Liberal amendment because again it would have changed the date for the election of the first district board to the year 2000.

I would then move that subsection 2(7) of the bill be amended by adding the following subsection to section 1 of the Education Act. I'll read the entire amendment because what this does is add a children's bill of rights to the Education Act. This is a bill that was proposed by Mr David Moll of the Toronto Board of Education, and I will present it. The addition to section 1 would read:

"Children's bill of rights

"(11) Every district school board shall maintain the standards necessary to ensure that the following rights of children are respected:

"1. The school programs meet all of the children's individual needs sufficiently to give each of them a reasonable opportunity to learn.

"2. The curriculum for each school has clear standards that are meaningful, inclusive and pedagogically sensible.

"3. The measures used to evaluate the achievement of each child are realistic, reflect the diversity of the children and can be used to improve school programs.

"4. Access is offered to junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten.

"5. No class in the primary division has more than 20 students and no class in the junior or senior division has more than 25 students.

"6. Each school has a library staffed by a teacher librarian.

"7. Physical education programs with suitable indoor and outdoor recreational space are available.

"8. Strong programs in visual and performing arts are available, including music, art, drama and dance.

"9. Strong language programs are available, including English as a second language, French and international and native languages.

"10. Math, science and technology programs adequate computer resources are available.

"12. There is a full range of special education programs that meet the needs of exceptional learners.

"13. Psychological and social services are available to support student learning.

"14. The second school program prepares students for whatever future they choose.

"15. Adult education is available as needed, including literacy, numeracy, English as a second language, citizenship courses, instruction for completion of high school education and employment skills training.

"16. Child care is provided in schools to ensure quality care and to help young children with the transition from home to school.

"17. Schools are safe and healthy and are clean and well maintained.

"18. Schools provide a dedicated professional staff of teachers and support staff to ensure high learning and safety standards.

"19. Meaningful parent involvement is encouraged with sufficient support to make participation in the school system effective."

The Chair: Debate?

Mr Wildman: On a point of order: If you turn to page 34 in our amendments, you will find that we've moved a similar amendment — exactly the same — only we were moving it to section 8, which was amending subsection 335(2.1) of the Education Act. Could the

Chair request legislative counsel, just for the sake of order, to give us an opinion as to which would be the better place for this amendment to be put?

Ms Marilyn Leitman: They actually do two different things. Although the goals are identical, as listed in the paragraphs, the amendment just moved requires the district school boards to maintain those standards. Your motion to 335 requires the commission to follow those standards when carrying out its mandate.

Mr Wildman: Okay. So if by chance Mrs McLeod's amendment doesn't pass, then my amendment would still be in order.

Ms Leitman: That's right.

Mrs McLeod: If by chance my amendment doesn't pass, I will certainly be supporting Mr Wildman's amendment at a further point in the debate. But in all seriousness, I did want to give credit to David Moll and his board for having put the effort into wording this particular proposal for a children's bill of rights. I'm not optimistic, nor is Mr Wildman, I think, of the government supporting it, but the reason it's here is because we would like this debate to be about children and the education of children. There really is nothing anywhere in this bill that speaks to the education and the needs of children and there are absolutely no guarantees in any of this that the needs of children are going to be addressed.

There will be a number of amendments we put forward which set out ways in which we feel that the needs of children for adequate programs and the special needs of children have to be addressed in any proposals put forward for the school board amalgamations that can be carried out without any further recourse to legislation under the terms of this act. We felt that by putting forward the children's bill of rights as a proposal we would at least be recognizing that the focus here should be indeed not on getting control of governance or getting control of educational finance but on how some effort is made to carry out a commitment to children.

Ms Lankin: We will be supporting this amendment in both locations in the bill. We want to indicate our congratulations to the Toronto board for supporting this wording and putting this forward to this legislative process. I did want to point out, however, that it wasn't the Toronto board that developed this wording. I think it's important for government members to know that parents in our Toronto schools came together and did the work to develop this children's bill of rights, parents who care about what's happening in their kids' classroom. That's their prime focus.

All the discussion that has been taking place over the last number of months about savings that can be made in the system — we even heard the parliamentary assistant today say that he wanted to proceed with the date 1997 so that these savings could be achieved and could be put back into the classroom.

If people actually believed that money was going to be reinvested back into the classroom, you would be easing some of the concern that's out there, but certainly we have heard from the minister himself predictions of another \$1 billion being taken out of the education system, and people wonder exactly where that will come from.

We're not given any comfort by the minister's ongoing statements that so much of the education dollar is spent outside the classroom. In fact, he incorrectly quotes those figures. Also, as you know, he includes in the definition of what's outside of the classroom many of these very essential services that parents and others in the education system believe are absolutely critical to the education of our children, things like our librarians and librarian-teachers, things like the music programs and the sports and physical education programs and the arts programs.

I just want to share with you an opportunity I had of attending a conference of over 350 secondary school students who participate in the student councils of our Ontario secondary schools. I did a series of workshops on Bill 104. In talking to them about their concerns in the education system and what they were experiencing, their plea was for those of us in governments, in the legislatures, to understand the importance of these various areas that the minister continually refers to as being outside of the classroom to the production of a well-rounded adult coming out into our community, into the workforce. I talked to students who were pursuing careers in arts and couldn't understand how the minister didn't realize the importance of these programs to their education.

I just recently, on Friday, as many of us I hope did, participated in the Take Your MPP to School Day and went to two elementary schools in my constituency and met with students who were participating in library programming, who were doing real learning in the library with a librarian-teacher, and also in arts programming and music programming — that, by the way, offering preparation time to their teachers to do further work on their classroom studies that would be upcoming.

1350

The system as it is set up is strained and we know that, but if we continue to have a government that seems dedicated in its purpose to removing funding from the system and that defines these essential programs as being outside of the classroom, many educators and many parents worry in terms of what that means for our kids coming out of our school system.

This doesn't commit you to money; this is not a financial amendment. But this does commit you to supporting the spirit of what our schools should be accomplishing: focusing on children and children's needs. This does set a framework of what we as legislators, after having listened to educators in the system and having listened to parents who are speaking on behalf of their children and what they want for their children, having listened to them, it does set a framework of what we all collectively want to see accomplished in our school system for our children. The finances that are available will be applied to these key areas.

If this is an exercise that is about more than cutting funds from the system, if this an exercise about improving the quality of education in our system, as we have heard often, then surely you must support an amendment that simply seeks to put a guarantee in place for parents and for their children that these services are not going to be considered to be extraneous to the classroom, that you're going to understand that these are critical elements of a child's education. There's no better time to guarantee

that than when we have this opportunity before us in the legislation today, so I urge you to support this.

Mr Duncan: I'd just like to say to the government, we have heard repeatedly from supporters of the bill that they want to have an opportunity to discuss the broader questions in education, not just governance. They want to talk about curriculum, they want to talk about extended curriculum, ie, those services that are currently available in schools that they want to see maintained that the government doesn't view as being part of the classroom. They also want to talk about accountability and this deals specifically with accountability and it deals with the framework for accountability.

Finally, the biggest question that we've heard from delegation after delegation at our committee hearings and in special forums that we organized, they want to talk about everything in the light of funding. This gives us, in our view, and the reason we endorsed it and brought it forward, the opportunity to discuss the broader questions in education, issues that affect children, issues that affect the classroom and the quality of education we provide in this province, not simply one of who's going to govern what and not simply one that overlooks the key questions in education: curriculum, extended curriculum and accountability.

Mr Wildman: Chair, I had hoped that we would have heard from a member of the government —

Interjection.

Mr Wildman: Okay. A few moments ago I said that in my view this bill was not about education, it was about control and money and taking money out. This amendment changes the character of the bill, in my view, but if the government maintains that it is indeed determined to meet the needs of all children, then this states it explicitly. This amendment gives the government members the opportunity to reinforce the view that Bill 104 deals with the needs of kids and that the government is determined to deal with the needs of individual children in our schools.

The first right listed: "The school programs meet all of the children's individual needs sufficiently to give each of them a reasonable opportunity to learn." I won't go through them all but I would also highlight a couple that have been raised repeatedly by deputants, whether they be students in some cases, parents in many cases, boards in many cases, and teachers in many cases, as well as others.

Number 17: "Schools are safe and healthy and are clean and well-maintained." Because of some provisions later on in the bill with regard to outsourcing, there is a serious concern, not just among CUPE members and support staff people who might be directly affected immediately but among teachers and parents about the safety of their children if there is contracting out.

There was a lot of concern expressed by deputants before the committee about the coming funding formula and what it would mean in light of the definition, which my colleagues have referred to, that the government uses as defining "out of classroom." Many were concerned that junior kindergarten programs, and perhaps senior kindergarten programs as well, are doomed if the government maintains the view that junior kindergarten is somehow outside of the classroom.

The Legislature has already expressed, in support of a Liberal private member's bill, its desire to limit class sizes in Ontario. This puts it in this government legislation and makes it the responsibility of the ministry to enforce limits on class sizes, because we've seen the increase in class sizes has been raised repeatedly by deputants before the committee. We've also heard the arguments about the importance of libraries, as well as some of the other programs, so I won't go through them all.

This amendment gives the government members an opportunity to demonstrate explicitly that they are determined to ensure that the education system serves the needs of kids in a safe, healthy learning environment. I implore the members of the committee to support this amendment unanimously.

Mr O'Toole: I'm pleased to report that I have met with and spoken to David Moll on a number of occasions and I'm pleased to see him bring this forward. Who could argue with the children's bill of rights, really? In the broadest context, even the news today is telling us of our concern to be guardians of children's rights. But you know, if I look at the very depth of this bill and its history and its purpose, today, really, the system is fraught with inequities. Much of what you said in this is inconsistent with what's happening under the organization of boards' governance today.

This bill attempts to address the inequities and I believe this is completely a Toronto view of the educational system —

Interjections.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, order, please.

Mr O'Toole: I'd like consistency and equity for each child throughout all of Ontario and that's really what I think all of us want.

Mrs McLeod: There is nothing in this bill that addresses the issue of equity. What this bill does is make it much less likely that local trustees are going to be able to address the issues of equity within their own school systems. I believe what Mr O'Toole is referring to is his hope that the government's subsequent decisions on funding may assist in the development of something more equitable, but all the indications are that the government is looking to make major cuts in the funding of education.

The statement that was made yesterday by one of our presenters perhaps summarizes those who bring a great concern to how the government will approach the issue of equity, and that was the person who said: "Equity at the lowest common denominator is not progress, and it is certainly not progress for children." If there is really to be equity and if this government's goal beyond Bill 104 is to provide the funding resources that would ensure that there can be equity for every student, that meets every student's needs, as the minister has said, then they should welcome this statement of the bill of rights and feel comfortable supporting it.

Ms Lankin: I shouldn't be surprised at Mr O'Toole's comments, but let me say very directly to him: If in fact you believe it is the goal of your government to bring equity to the children in our school system, no matter where they live in the province, then how could you be

opposed to the elements set out in this children's bill of rights and those being enshrined in the legislation?

1400

Every child in this province — I agree with you on that point — should have access to the kinds of provisions that are set out in this children's bill of rights. This should be what reform of the education system is about. Unfortunately, we are dealing with this in a piecemeal fashion. Unfortunately, we don't have the funding formula in front of us today. Unfortunately, there are other elements of curriculum reform that aren't here before us today. But what we have before us today is a redefinition of the governance and the role of governance in the system.

What this bill of rights sets out to do is to ensure that within the governance of our school system the needs of children are put foremost. The roles and responsibilities of those in the district school board shall be to ensure that every child in our school system in Ontario has access to a basic, minimum, equitable series of programs and services in the education system. That's not at odds with what your minister professes your government's education reform is all about. It's not at odds with what you said, other than your anti-Toronto comments.

Let me just say to you, last week when I joined your committee in Thunder Bay and in Barrie, I heard parents and educators and others make these very points on behalf of their children. I believe parents across this province want to see their children have access to these very basic, minimum programs and services and I think you do them a disservice if you and your colleagues vote against this.

Mr Duncan: I'd just like to say, as somebody who's not from Toronto, that in Windsor we'd certainly like to see these kinds of things. School programs that meet children's individual needs: We support that. Curriculum with clear standards that are meaningful and inclusive: That's not a Toronto thing; that applies to the whole province. Measures to evaluate the achievement of each child that are realistic and reflect the diversity of the children: That applies everywhere; indeed it agrees with what a number of you have said about having meaningful comparators and statistics.

Access to junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten: I'm proud that my board, a program my son went through, has been able to maintain that in spite of your cuts, and I think it's something the people in our community support and will continue to support. Class sizes: That's a key issue. Again, parents, whether they live in Toronto or Windsor or Red Lake, support smaller class sizes. Everybody knows there's a direct correlation between class size and a teacher's ability to impart.

I don't see this as Toronto-based; I see this as children-based. It doesn't matter if you live in Windsor or Red Lake or Toronto or Ottawa, these points make sense. These points, in our view, represent a full debate and constitute the broader issue of education, which is what we should be discussing, not simply an attempt to take out \$150 million from the education system.

Mr Wildman: I must say I'm disappointed by the intervention by Mr O'Toole. I've looked at this very carefully and tried to figure out what in it he would say

is a Toronto view, since we've heard requests for these kinds of things from presenters in every community we've gone to outside of Toronto, as well as in Toronto. I am not a member from Toronto. I represent a rural northern riding, one of the largest ridings in Ontario. I live in the Central Algoma Board of Education jurisdiction. It is one of the poorest boards, one of the lowest assessments in Ontario.

I'm proud to say that board has had junior kindergarten programs for 20 years, and this year, thanks to the cuts that your government made, they've maintained that program but they've had to put it on alternate days full-day, rather than half-day every day. They're very worried that the new funding formula will mean that junior kindergarten will be cut out next year, particularly if they're amalgamated, as is proposed in 104, with the other boards in the area — the Sault Ste Marie board, that doesn't have junior kindergarten; an assessment-rich board that has chosen not to have junior kindergarten.

Central Algoma has recognized that in their area, where there are many disadvantaged rural children, junior kindergarten is an important program to give those kids a head start on their educational career and on their lives.

My four children all went through those programs. I have a little girl at home now who in two years I hope will be going to junior kindergarten. I want this in this legislation so that my little girl will have the same opportunity that her older brothers and sister had. Let's vote for it and put it in here. This is not a Toronto view. This is an Ontario view. This is a children's view.

Applause.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, education is a very important subject and we all feel very passionate about it, but I would ask you, in the interests of getting through the exercise, please refrain from intervening.

Mr Skarica: Ms Lankin said, "This doesn't commit you to money." While I wish that were true, I don't think it is. The title is "children's bill of rights," and I'm looking at paragraph 15, which talks about adult education. It's my understanding that children are under the age of 18 and adults are over 18.

Interruption.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, please.

Mr Skarica: It says "children's bill of rights" and it refers to adult education and that would have a financial implication. We'd all like to fund all of these things in a perfect world, but we know there is a debt and deficit problem and there are limited moneys to deal with programs.

Going further, paragraph 18 indicates, "Schools provide a dedicated professional staff of teachers and support staff to ensure high learning and safety standards." In my reading of that, it would preclude certain initiatives that are already under way in the province, such as the early childhood education program in Ottawa that we heard from when we were in Ottawa.

Currently the Ottawa board does provide junior kindergarten at the cost \$1.7 million. They are having a pilot project, and the preliminary results are that the early childhood educators, who are not professional teachers but are college trained — there could be an argument made that they are not teachers. In any event, the prelimi-

nary results show that those kids are doing just as well as the kids in JK with unionized teachers. Alia Kent was quoted in the Ottawa paper as saying that if the Ottawa board couldn't provide JK with unionized teachers they shouldn't provide the program at all.

Paragraph 18 could be well interpreted that that pilot program would not proceed and that we couldn't have early childhood educators in JK.

Number 19, another example: "Meaningful parent involvement is encouraged with sufficient support to make participation in the school system effective." What does "sufficient support" mean? I would interpret that to mean financial support.

Going back to Windsor, we heard, Mr Duncan, from the Roman Catholic separate board parent council, where they have raised millions and millions of dollars on their own volition. They're not asking for money; they're asking for more participation in the school system, and they want to be full partners.

Interjection.

Mr Skarica: I have a right to give my position as well as they do.

When I'm looking at 19, "sufficient support" could well be interpreted to mean that there is a requirement for financial support, which in fact many parents aren't asking for; they're just asking for more involvement in the system.

Finally, dealing with the equity argument, I've been through the province now three times in the last year, and we've heard over and over and over again that one of the main problems with education was the equity of funding, which varies from \$4,200 per student to \$9,000 per student, depending where in Ontario you go. This has been a problem that apparently has been outstanding for some 20 or 30 years or for whatever, and no government has had the courage to deal with it. This government now is finally going to deal with that issue to ensure that every child in the province gets an equal education. This is part of the legislation to deal with that problem that has been outstanding for a long time but that no one has been prepared to have the courage to deal with.

1410

Mrs McLeod: We could spend a lot of time on this and maybe we should, because this is really the crux of the presentations we heard and the concerns we have heard from trustees, from teachers, from union members, and most particularly from parents and indeed from the few students who were able to present to our committee.

I submit again that it is the Minister of Education for this government who has blithely assured people that his goal is to meet the needs of every child; that there will be no second-class students in the province of Ontario. We believe that this bill of rights simply provides support to make that statement something which the minister is held to.

Since the parliamentary assistant wants to keep taking this bill back to the matter of money, and since that indeed is all this bill is about, let's just deal with some of the issues of money, because that is the concern people have raised: that when the money is put in place it will not be enough to meet the needs of children or, yes, Mr Skarica, of the adults who didn't get that equal chance at

an education and who need that equal chance at some point past the age of 18.

I'm not going to take as long as I should, but I can't help but start with the last point that Mr Skarica made, which is that parents aren't asking for money. If we heard one thing from parent councils over and over again — and these are the official representatives of parent councils, and we heard from hundreds of those parent councils through official representatives — they said: "We want to be involved. We will not take on the role of the school boards as volunteers. But even to have the level of involvement that we want, we do need training, we need resources, we need to be able to communicate."

To suggest that meaningful participation of parents might involve some dollars and therefore you couldn't support even that part of this bill of rights certainly isn't responding to the concerns you've heard from those very parents.

The junior kindergarten and child care: I'm not sure why you would bring up that example of "child care is just as effective as junior kindergarten is," particularly given the kinds of submissions we've had, one in particular which gave us a very clear articulation of the fact that, as important as both child care and junior kindergarten are, they are different. We need both, and that's why this bill of rights speaks to both.

Mr Wildman has already touched on some of the areas that are outside the definition of classroom education that are here. There is a concern that things like libraries will disappear. Special education is here because of the number of presentations we've had from parents who are concerned that the special needs of their children are not going to be met and have reason to be concerned, because of that \$150 million that you said this was all about that you're going to save. You know full well that \$1.3 million is coming directly out of educational assistance that would provide support for special education learners.

Psychological and social services: We've had presentations on how those are not classed within the realm of the classroom, and they're liable to disappear.

Finally, on adult education, Mr Skarica, it worries me you singled this out. One of the great fears we've heard is that, given the cuts to adult education that have taken place, where the government provides grants for adult education outside of Toronto and Ottawa and given the fact that some 85% of adult education has been lost in some of those boards, Toronto and Ottawa see the writing on the wall and are desperately concerned about the survival of adult education. I'm sorry you focused on that one as something that should be excluded.

Having said that, if you would support the bill of rights with a friendly amendment that makes adult education something we commit to in another area, I'd accept that as a friendly amendment in return for your support of the balance of the bill of rights.

Ms Lankin: That is the point that I was going to make. Let me first of all very briefly comment on the points raised by Mr Skarica with respect to child care and number 18 in the bill, which calls for schools to "provide a dedicated professional staff of teachers and support staff

to ensure high learning and safety standards." I do not know how you could be opposed to that kind of principle, but let me say your arguments around child care and the cross-use of different education professionals hold no water when you look at the wording here.

Early childhood educators are professional teachers, Mr Skarica. They are a professional group of educators who work in child care settings. As we know, there are experiments taking place in different parts of the province where we have seen junior kindergarten being offered coterminously with child care programs in child care centres, as well as child care being offered in schools. This does not at all mandate the use of one type of professional teacher over another, and I think it, like in many other areas in this bill of rights, sets out a broad goal to be achieved. The means by which we achieve that are open to the debate, the consultation, the decision-making that is normal within the education system.

Similarly, your comments about meaningful parent involvement — we heard over and over again from parents who were saying: "We don't even have the resources to get information to our parents, to make photocopies, to get phone calls out there, to pay for the long-distance phone calls in the large boards. We're not getting the support and the training we need from the ministry to feel confident in the jobs and the roles set out for us now, let alone an evolving role, to what, we don't know, as proposed under this new legislation."

In a broad sense, this government is proposing to bring more powers and more involvement to parent councils. You couldn't commit yourself to ensuring that there's sufficient support to make participation in the school system effective. That's all it says. If you want it to be effective, you give it the support that's required. That level of support, that type of support, surely will be part of the consultation that you'll undertake with parent councils as you develop the new, evolved role, with greater responsibilities inherent in that for parent councils.

With respect to adult education, I agree with the point that has been made. If you take great offense at that because this is entitled the children's bill of rights, let's delete that section.

Mr Wildman: We could change it to an education bill of rights.

Ms Lankin: My colleague says we could change it to an education bill of rights. I still believe that adult education should be available as needed, and that's all that's said here is "as needed, including literacy, numeracy, English as a second language, citizenship courses, instruction for completion of high school education and employment skills training."

With this government's focus and emphasis on giving people a hand up instead of a handout, you would think that some of these skill development programs are things that you would, in a broad sense, in terms of setting out a goal and a vision for what our education system should be about and what it should be accomplishing — I fail to see how you could not support that. But if that's the problem, let's take this out.

This whole section is attempting to set out, once you perform your magic of equalization in funding — and

that's another whole debate we'll have at that time, when we see the details of it, and whether it is sufficient to serve the needs of children in the system — but once you have equity in financing, there's still a question of what it is you're purchasing with those dollars, what it is you're providing with those dollars.

What does equity mean? Equity doesn't just mean equity in the dollars you spend. It means equity in terms of the kind of programs you attempt to provide to our children; that's what this is about, with whatever dollars are available. We suspect that they will be too few and we suspect that school boards will be strangled in their attempts to meet the needs of kids.

Be that as it may, that is a fight for another day. Right now, what we are trying to do is spell out what must be considered, what must be part, what must be considered to be essential in the education of our children, what school boards must hold as primary in their decision-making with respect to delivery of programs and services to our kids. If it's not all rhetoric, what you say about improving the quality of the system and ensuring that there's equity for our kids, if that's not rhetoric, you have to be prepared to set out in legislation what it is you expect the education system to provide for our children.

This is the parents' view, parents who care about their children. This is a child-centred view. Surely you can bring yourselves to support this. Mr Skarica, I would say to you one more time that this does not commit you to one cent. You will make that decision as a government. You will be judged by the decisions you make with respect to that, but whatever money is available in the system, it must be spelled out somewhere: what we believe, as legislators, that money should be spent on in providing services and education for our children. This is an incredible step towards providing true equity in the province.

Mr Wildman: I won't prolong this. My colleagues have made the arguments well. I just want to respond to two specific things that the parliamentary assistant said. He said, in regard to 19, that the words "meaningful parent involvement...with sufficient support to make participation...effective" was something he couldn't accept. That then tells me that despite all of the rhetoric in the bill, as well as the comments made by members of the government about wanting parents to be more involved, it's just that, rhetoric, because the government isn't prepared to give the parents the support that makes it meaningful.

Mr Skarica has basically said that to us, that he cannot accept a requirement to give parents the support needed to make their involvement meaningful. I find that really disappointing. With regard to the argument about adult education not fitting into this, I would propose a friendly amendment that the words "children's bill of rights" at the head, be changed to "education bill of rights." I think that's a friendly amendment.

1420

The Chair: As you well know, Mr Wildman, despite what might be the wishes of the committee, we can't propose amendments. They were due this morning at 9 o'clock. We are constrained by the rules.

Mr Wildman: You can't amend amendments?

The Chair: That is the case, unfortunately.

Mrs McLeod: I'm not optimistic that we are going to get agreement of all three parties, but is there not a process by which there could be an agreement of all three parties to a friendly amendment?

The Chair: I don't believe that's the case. The rules provide for amendments having been tabled this morning at 9 o'clock.

Mr Wildman: The debate of the amendments is meaningless, then.

Mrs McLeod: If I may then, Madam Chair, add my continuing concern —

Mr Wildman: Why bother debating them? Let's just vote on them.

The Chair: We are following the time allocation motion which the government has passed, as you know, and therefore we can't entertain any amendments.

Ms Lankin: Madam Chair, not to question your ruling, but perhaps I could ask to seek clarification in this area. I have participated in committee hearings before in which there have been amendments that had been properly tabled before the committee and, during the process of debate, those amendments were further amended through the committee process. I believe there is a process available to us and perhaps we need clarification on how we can achieve what, at some point in time, might actually be a mutual goal of all the parties.

Mr Wildman: Particularly if it's a friendly amendment. It's not something that tries to change the impact of the motion, it's simply to deal with a wording problem.

The Chair: Let me say that regardless of what might be the wishes of the committee, the time allocation motion speaks very clearly. I'd be happy to read it again; it's the reason I read it at the beginning of the session. All amendments had to be filed by 9 o'clock this morning and we simply cannot go beyond that, pursuant to the terms of the motion that was passed.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, I think it's an exercise in futility anyway, but I would find it hard to believe, in interpretation of that — indeed party amendments had to be placed by each caucus at 9 o'clock this morning — that it would necessarily eliminate a process of friendly amendment agreed to by all three parties.

As you well know, that time allocation motion was almost impossible to achieve any due process with, because those of us who have been with this committee throughout all 10 days of its hearings arrived back in Toronto last night at 10:30 and our amendments had to be on the legislative clerk's desk by 9 o'clock this morning. We met those time lines.

We've put in a considerable amount of effort by telephone in order to get amendments tabled. I was making amendments to my amendments as recently as 10 minutes to nine this morning, attempting to incorporate what we heard in the hearings yesterday. I would think that some interpretation that allows at least the consideration of friendly amendments to the process would be in order.

The Chair: Ms Lankin, are you speaking to this point?

Ms Lankin: I would like to take it a point further than Mrs McLeod. I don't believe it's just simply a question of friendly amendments. I understand the time allocation

motion. I understand that all three parties had to file their major amendments to the bills by 9 o'clock this morning and all three parties met that requirement. I put it to you, however, in your role as sort of guardian of the democratic process, that when committee members come forward and now see those amendments for the first time, in debate of those amendments there must be, for democracy to be served, a process available to committee members to be able to move amendments to the amendment. Not to put forward wholesale new amendments to the bill; I understand the time frame for that is gone. But if we have an amendment before us and if in debate there is an opportunity where we see consensus is emerging with amendments to certain of the language that had been put forward, we are able to achieve an improvement in the legislation that reflects what we heard through the public input, in that process of public input, surely that must be allowed for in the system.

I believe that it is your responsibility as Chair to find a way to facilitate that. I stress again, not to allow brand-new amendments but, as amendments are being debated, to allow those to be subject to the normal democratic process of further amendment on the floor of debate.

The Chair: Ms Lankin, I appreciate the difficulties that all opposition members have had with respect to bringing in their amendments in a timely fashion. I hope you'll appreciate that I'm constrained by the motion which indeed has passed. However, if the members of the committee have some way that they think we can proceed further, I'd certainly be happy to hear how we can. Until that point, I am looking at a time allocation motion which does not allow for unanimous consent on anything. Therefore, we have to operate within the strict rules of that motion. I will certainly listen to whatever you have to say. If you can find a way, I'd be happy to entertain it.

Mr Wildman: I'll try to be helpful here. I mean that sincerely. As I understand the time allocation motion, it required all parties, government and two opposition parties, to file their substantive amendments by 9 am. Further reading of the motion I think will tell you that it does not say there cannot be debate of those amendments and that there cannot be votes on those amendments.

If we debate the amendment and everybody comes to a consensus and says, "Yeah, that makes sense," surely the time allocation motion does not mean that we can't agree to something. That seems to be what you're saying to me.

The Chair: Mr Wildman, as I said, I'm certainly open to ways in which we can fulfil our obligations as legislators and also work within the spirit of the time allocation motion.

Mr Wildman: This is not a new substantive amendment.

The Chair: I hear you, Mr Wildman. Mr O'Toole, is this on the same point?

Mr O'Toole: Yes, it is. It's my understanding that the motion also said there would be committee of the whole before this bill was voted on. At that time there could be proposed amendments, I suspect; I'm not an expert.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr O'Toole, but that doesn't deal with the issue at the moment, which is —

Mr O'Toole: Please excuse me, it does, because it would leave one with the impression that we're resistant

to the debate that's being held here, and that is not the case.

The Chair: Mr O'Toole, I really don't think that speaks to the issue. I'm going to suggest to members that we take a five-minute recess and consider this matter. If there is any way in which members can be helpful in this issue, I certainly will be happy to listen.

The committee recessed from 1429 to 1452.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, members of the committee, I've spent considerable time reviewing the matter and I want to thank the clerk for looking through all available precedents to assist me in my decision.

It is unfortunate, but we are constrained by the wording of the time allocation motion. Ms Lankin did refer me to the proceedings in Bill 26 which she thought might be a precedent for allowing even friendly amendments. The time allocation motion on Bill 26 in fact allowed for three days of clause-by-clause, then the time allocation motion was invoked and amendments had to be deposited and there were no further amendments possible at that time.

I would say to the committee members that the only exception would be editorial changes. I don't believe that the changes that have been contemplated are in the nature of editorial changes.

Mr Wildman: Chair, I have a proposal to make, then, that might resolve our problem, although I would think changing "children's" to "education" is an editorial change. Anyway, why don't we vote on each of these rights individually?

The Chair: Well, what I have before me, Mr Wildman, is one amendment which includes 19 portions to it, not 19 amendments.

Mr Wildman: That's right, but we vote on each of the 19, whether we accept them or not, and then we vote on the whole after we're finished.

The Chair: I think for that to happen we should have had 19 amendments, and I do regret that we will have to deal with it in this fashion.

I still have some speakers to the original amendment.

Mr Duncan: I just wanted to respond to Mr Skarica's response. I think his response is very instructive because it indicated and said very clearly that the intent of this bill is money. I don't think any of us would debate or argue with the notion of making better use of existing resources that are used in education, but I think four points need to be pointed out.

You reference the Essex County Roman Catholic Separate School Board parents' council. They very clearly said that they don't want to be in the business of fund-raising. They do it because they care about their kids and they do it because of the cutbacks that have happened in education.

We talk about equity financing and equity funding, and I keep coming back and harking back to the points we had all made about how funding may be equitable, but if it's not enough, we've got a big problem, and that's the concern everyone has. When we see unnamed sources from the Ministry of Education more than confirming what the minister himself had said with respect to the amounts of dollars that will be taken out of education, I think that's cause for great concern.

This amendment, in our view, permits equity in terms of programming. It permits students, no matter where they come from — large urban areas, small rural areas, north or south — to access these kinds of programs.

The final point I wanted to make was that again we've seen, in my view, the distortion of facts. For instance, we now have an answer. The government, including the minister, has been saying that local taxes have gone up 120% in 10 years. I asked a very specific question about mill rates, because we have been calling boards and we have yet to find a mill rate that's gone up by that much. Now, in our response, we see why. When they talk about the local share, oops, they forgot to include full funding for separate schools. Oops, they forgot to include the share of additional new mandated programs. Oops, they don't have mill rate increases, and I can tell you that mill rate increases have nowhere approximated the 120%. And oops, we forgot to count the fact that not only have GLGs not gone up; they have gone down substantially in total since 1990.

So when the parliamentary assistant speaks against this motion because of increased cost, we think we should be putting the needs of our children first and we should be discussing those needs not only in light of the existing funding envelope but in light of what we need not only to be competitive but to be the best, because the other statistic we've heard is that in terms of North American jurisdictions, Ontario is 46th in terms of per pupil spending. I would much rather spend more money on our kids than give a big tax cut.

Mr Skarica: I agree with Mr Duncan's last comment that the needs of children should be paramount and should be first.

While each one of the 19 provisions independently no one really can argue with, collectively there are implications, both financially and otherwise. I'll give you two examples.

"18. Schools provide a dedicated professional staff of teachers and support staff to ensure high learning and safety standards." Who could argue with that? But my definition of "teachers," and the definition of teachers I've heard from the unions, doesn't include early childhood educators. So to go back to the Ottawa Citizen, if it does include early childhood educators, the Ottawa board could save \$700,000 of the \$1.7-million cost of their JK program.

However, it has other implications. For example, if you tie that in with 4, "Access is offered to junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten," to enforce both those, it has implications that are non-financial. For example, Alia Kent, president of the Women Teachers' Association of Ottawa, said if the Ottawa board can't provide a junior kindergarten program with unionized teachers, they shouldn't provide any program at all. That seems to be contrary, from the teachers' own unions, regarding the right to number 4. But then again you go back to, what is the definition of teachers? Does it include early childhood educators or not? I don't know.

Dealing with another aspect, class size, number 5, I'd like to go to Mr Wildman's own riding, and I'm glad you're back because I don't like to talk behind your back, Mr Wildman.

1500

Mr Wildman: I was over there looking for some tea.

Mr Skarica: Motherhood issues are of course that we should have the lowest class sizes possible. The lowest class size board that we heard in our hearings is a board in Mr Wildman's riding called the Hornepayne board. They have classes that are as low as five kids in a class, as we heard. You see, we were listening, Mr Wildman.

Interjection.

The Chair: All right. Mr Wildman, I'll give you lots of time to respond if you wish.

Mr Skarica: We're always accused of not listening, but we were listening, Mr Wildman.

The Hornepayne board meets the number 5 criteria very comfortably, but combine that with number 10: "Math, science and technology programs, adequate computer resources are available." We heard from the Hornepayne board people that they cancelled all their technology programs because there aren't the resources there to do it right now. If we mandated both 5 and 10, Hornepayne would easily fit into 5 but would not fit into 10. Then the core question is, where are the funds coming from?

Interjection.

Mr Skarica: If I could just finish. Then we go back to Ms Lankin's comment: These bills of rights don't commit you to money. Yes, they do; they must. Hornepayne, for example, would have to somehow come up with the money for the technology programs.

Interjection.

Mr Skarica: I heard the comment, "You come up with the money." This again goes back to that we have a debt and deficit problem that people do not want to acknowledge.

Interjection.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, please, let's have some order.

Mr Skarica: The tax cut had nothing to do with Hornepayne cancelling its technology program. It has nothing to do —

Interjection.

Mr Skarica: I don't want to debate with the people in the crowd.

The Chair: We would appreciate some order, please.

Mr Skarica: The tax cut has nothing to do with Hornepayne's problems regarding technology. They're far more complex than that.

While each and every one of these are basically motherhood issues, once you start tying them in and seeing what's happening around the province, it's just not that simple and there are in fact cost implications and other implications. One of the criticisms that we've heard, quite frankly, is, "You haven't looked at this carefully enough," and those type of things. That criticism applies full force with this bill of rights.

Ms Lankin: Mr Skarica, I get more worried every time I hear you open your mouth. The bottom line is that you as a representative of the Minister of Education and the Ministry of Education are prepared to sit here and say that it's fine by you that Hornepayne doesn't have adequate resources to provide computer and technology training to the kids in that class. That's all the more reason why this is needed in the legislation.

Madam Chair, I respect that you have made a ruling. I just want to say that I think it is a damn crime that this government could proceed with a time allocation motion that would limit the ability of members of a committee to deal substantively with debate and change to amendments that have been filed by the parties to this legislation. It is beyond me to understand a democratic process which forbids, once an amendment is on the floor, the members of the assembly who are there to debate that, from having ownership and control over that amendment, from further amending it and refining it to reflect the common will, the common wish of the majority of those assembled. It is beyond me that this government could construct time allocation motions that continue to trample on the democratic process.

I do not intend to go on any further. There are many other amendments that we want to have time to discuss. I simply say to the government members that if you believe that your approach to education is all about saving money no matter what it means in the classroom, then you'll vote against this. You'll support the comments of the parliamentary assistant, who has made it very clear that this is simply about money and that to support broad principles and broad goals of what we want to accomplish in the education system is not appropriate because it may need resources.

Your choices are clear. If for you this is about money and cutting money out of the education system despite what happens to our kids — damn the kids in the class — then you support Mr Skarica and his approach on this and you vote against this. If on the other hand you're prepared to say to your own government and to those governance structures that are established under this bill, the district school boards, that with whatever resources are provided there are some fundamentals that must form the basis of the education system for our children, then you support this amendment and you work alongside all of us in the future to ensure that we have the kind of economy, the kind of social conscience, the kind of commitment to support adequate funding in the future.

Mrs McLeod: I don't have any need to prolong the government's attempts at rationalization, so I think we should move on. I would just suggest to Mr Skarica, though, for consistency, if you believe that we should have all the details of implementation and all the details of cost before you pass legislation, you should join us in voting against Bill 104.

Mr Wildman: Madam Chair, I wasn't intending to intervene again in this debate, because we have been around the horn, but I've been stimulated by Mr Skarica's references to Hornepayne. I think it's important for us to recognize the very special circumstances of a very isolated small community in northwestern Ontario and not to try to apply it to the rest of the province.

I think everyone on the committee in Sudbury, when we heard the very good presentation of Ms Janice Beatty, the secretary-treasurer of the Hornepayne Board of Education, was impressed by the special circumstances of that very small isolated community. I think all members of the committee — and I mean this sincerely — tried to respond to that concern, and I appreciate Mr Skarica's concern about it.

But let's be clear: The reason Hornepayne faces the kinds of difficulties it does are the circumstances of its isolation. It is a very small community, a railroad town, with very little industry other than the railroad and a very small enrolment. Those are the special circumstances in Hornepayne. There is a solution for it, I believe, a solution that fits into the context of Bill 104. That is to have it treated as an isolate board, to have it treated the way the isolate boards are treated in Bill 104, to have them designated as school authorities. Hornepayne Board of Education should be designated as a school authority. That's I think how you'd start to deal with the concerns of the people of Hornepayne and the needs of those students.

You don't then say that because Hornepayne has special circumstances, you shouldn't vote for this. Of course Hornepayne has very small classes. It has a high school, for instance, of only 84 students in total. They can't provide many of the programs. We should understand that historically when they haven't been able to provide programs in math, science and technology that their students want, that board pays tuition for those kids to be boarded out in another community that can provide them with those programs. One of the reasons they only have 84 students in their high school is that many students are living in Barrie or Sudbury or Thunder Bay or Toronto with relatives and attending school in those other communities, and the Hornepayne Board of Education and the Hornepayne taxpayers are paying the tuition for those children to go to those schools. It's unfortunate. Everyone would like kids to be able to get their education where they live, with their families, but people in isolated northern communities have to make do with the situation they face.

I think we should be responding to the needs of Hornepayne. I think the Education Improvement Commission must, and I think again that it should be designated as a school authority under this bill, if it passes. But I don't think the Hornepayne situation gives us reason to vote against this bill of rights at all.

Mr Duncan: The parliamentary assistant's response just further — remember, we are now taking the financing of education to the province. Your response just heightens our concern about the availability of money.

It's very instructive that you raise the notion of computer resources. Two years ago, just after the minister froze capital spending for schools in this province, the Americans set an agenda that every classroom in the United States will be online and wired by the year 2000. Why? Because they recognize the significance of investing in education and investing in our kids.

The \$5 billion in revenue that you're sacrificing for the tax cut in our view would be better applied to schools and improving our ability to educate our children.

1510

The Chair: Any further debate on this amendment? Seeing none, all in favour? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

We now vote on all of section 2. Any further debate? All in favour of section 2? Opposed? Section 2 is carried.

We've received no amendments with respect to sections 3 to 6. Is there any debate with respect to those

sections? The next section on which we have amendments is section 7. If there's no objection, we could deal with all those sections together: sections 3 to 6.

All in favour of sections 3, 4, 5 and 6? Opposed? Sections 3 to 6 are carried.

We move to section 7.

Mr Wildman: I've an amendment to section 7 subsection (327)(3)(d)(vii.1) of the Education Act.

I move that clause 327(3)(d) of the Education Act, as set out in section 7 of the bill, be amended by adding the following subclause:

"(vii.1) representation on district school boards, by peer election or appointment, of the interests of students attending senior elementary and secondary schools of those district school boards."

The purpose of the amendment is to respond to the many suggestions that were made by students and in some cases by boards in the hearings that there should be student representation on boards of education to represent the concerns and views of the students, who are obviously the central people in the education system. They're who the education system is for.

We heard representation in a number of places we went to from very articulate, intelligent and informed young people who came before the committee to make their views known about the effects of Bill 104, which just served to reinforce for me the very positive role that students can and should play in the deliberations of boards. So the purpose of this is to ensure that there's a mechanism for getting student representation on the boards.

Mrs McLeod: We support the amendment. Should it, by chance, not meet with favour on the part of the government members, we will be moving a further amendment asking the EIC to look at student representation on the boards and how that might be achieved. I completely concur with Mr Wildman that one of the concerns we heard, from the very few students who were able to present to our committee, was that they were not going to be heard. They were very concerned that they had not been heard in the process of consultation on a bill which will certainly have an impact on their education. They want to be sure they have some chance to be heard in the future.

Mr Duncan: I want to mention in support of this amendment that just last week the Windsor Board of Education filled a vacancy that was created by the death of a trustee by appointing a young woman who had been serving as a student representative to fill out the term. That young woman by all accounts did an excellent job as a student representative on the board and will now fulfil that mandate. It makes sense to us that students can be representatives.

Mr O'Toole: The government, I believe, has proposed an amendment that deals with that in subsection 327(6.1). In that section it says that appointments to the board do not include any person elected or appointed to the district school board under (3)(d), which is the section we're dealing with.

Mr Wildman: What page number?

Mr O'Toole: It's page 16.

Mrs McLeod: That does not deal with students.

The Chair: In any event, we're dealing the motion at hand. We will get to the motion on page 16 at another point.

Any further debate with respect to this amendment?

Ms Lankin: With respect, I just want to make sure that Mr O'Toole and the government members are clear. If they think they have an amendment which accomplishes this, they may well vote against the amendment before us. If others around the table are right, that the amendment they are thinking of deals only with separate school representation, we shouldn't —

Mr O'Toole: If I may, through the Chair, for a point of clarification, page 16 is the government's motion and I believe it deals with, not the separate issue, but the trustee issue.

Mrs McLeod: It doesn't deal with students. It deals with separate school appointments to public boards where there is no separate school board for secondary school purposes.

Mr Wildman: If I could use the example Mr Skarica raised, Hornepayne, at the high school level there is no separate board in Hornepayne, so the separate school ratepayers who support the elementary separate board, which is an isolate board, elect two people to represent them on the board of education when the board is dealing with secondary school matters. That's what the government motion deals with, that kind of circumstance. It doesn't relate, as my motion does, to student representation.

Ms Lankin: Just to clarify, the government motion deals with two sections under (3)(d), subclause (vi) and (vii), subclause (vi) being "representation on district school boards, by election or appointment, of the interests of supporters of rural separate schools and combined separate schools, for secondary school purposes," and (vii) being "representation on district school boards, by appointment, of the interests of members of bands in respect of which there is agreement under this act to provide instruction to pupils who are Indians within the meaning of the Indian Act (Canada)."

The proposed amendment we have before us that has been put forward by my colleague Mr Wildman adds a subclause to this which would allow for either the election or appointment of student trustees, for those representations of their interests to be made at the school board level. This is permissive; it addresses the concerns we have heard. There are many boards, as you well know, that have instituted this practice, and we would not want to see that precluded as a result of the legislation.

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I want to say first off that in my board I've dealt with the student trustees and I think they do a terrific job, so I think it's incumbent on us to somehow ensure we get student trustees. My issue with this — I don't know how we can deal with this, but the issue that I think is important is that we're changing the number of trustees. We have to figure out how we get the trustee representation on the board, how that happens, whether it be through elections or how that happens, and what the percentage should be. I don't see how that's answered here. I certainly want the same objective as you do. It certainly couldn't be the same student trustee if we were going to trustees of five or six, so maybe we could

have a little chat about that. It's important for me to understand.

Ms Lankin: I understand the point that you're raising. If you look to the section we're dealing with, subsection (3): "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations providing for..." Then it sets out a number of things including representation on, and election to, district school boards in a number of areas. Those clauses allow, in the area of rural separate schools, cross-appointed representation of Indian bands in those situations where boards have people who are determined to be Indians under the Indian Act.

We're saying that the Lieutenant Governor in Council should be able to make regulations to set out representation on boards by elected or peer-appointed students. We're not determining the number. We're not determining the proportion. It's permissive. We are allowing that to take place in the future and a regulation to be made to govern that. You may not, in the future, do it.

1520

Mrs Johns: Mandatory or permissive?

Ms Lankin: It's permissive because it says "may." It says, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations providing for..." If you don't have it in here, you may well find yourself with your hands tied with respect to being able to have official status or recognition of student trustees in the future. With it in here, you allow yourself the opportunity, through consultation and cabinet decision-making, to put in place a regulation in the future that would govern that situation.

Mrs McLeod: Further to that, may I help Mrs Johns? The amendment that we've proposed to deal with student representation asks the EIC to advise the minister on how to accommodate student representation on boards, and that's consistent with everything else. I mean, there's nothing that is determined here in terms of how many trustees on each board; that's something the EIC will advise the minister on.

The only thing that might need to happen is that the amendment that Mr O'Toole was referring to, which is a government amendment which allows certain individuals to be appointed as additions to the numbers set out in the bill — student representation might have to be included in that, but that could be done, I presume, by government at committee of the whole, if you choose to have student representation considered on these boards.

Mr McLean: Do (vi) and (vii) of clause 327(3)(d) not cover what this amendment is asking for?

Mr Tomlinson: The proposed amendment, the (vi) and the (vii), is simply to ensure that if there are native representatives appointed to the board or if there are separate school supporters appointed or elected to a public board for secondary school purposes, they are in addition to the number of members provided for under subsection (6), which is 5 to 22. In other words, they aren't part of the distribution process.

That doesn't get to the point that is being discussed here, whether students should be able to be at the board. However, it seems to me that this does not preclude boards doing what they do now, where they invite students to come to meetings, as I understand it, not as members of the board but maybe as representatives of the

students to perhaps participate in the discussions, but not to vote and not to have the other qualifications of members.

Mr Wildman: I don't think there needs to be a long debate on this issue. There are lots of other issues we need to deal with here.

If we look at page 5 of the bill, the key phrase, as my colleague indicated, is subsection (3), where it says, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council," in other words, the cabinet, "may make regulations providing for," and I've just added this to it. It's not requiring them to, not telling the cabinet they have to, it just says they "may." It's permissive, so it's not putting anything on the government that the government might decide they don't want. It's just saying that the cabinet could decide to do this if they wish. I would hope that would make it possible for all members of the committee to support this. I'm not saying the government "shall," I'm saying they "may."

Mr O'Toole: I appreciate the discussion on this particular issue. Today, in my area and some areas of the province, I know they do have student trustees under the current act. I don't know what provisions or empowers allow them to do that, but they are there, and I agree with Mrs Johns that they do function very well. I know them.

That being said, I don't personally have a problem with this aspect. I think in the broader review of the role of trustee and their ability to operate in kind of a committee format — that's my understanding. With the huge boards that we witnessed in part of Ontario compared to the size of France, they're going to have to operate in some kind of committee structure.

The role of the trustee as it would be defined in regulation, I gather, is more where I'd like to hear what the legislative counsel or the ministry counsel has to say on that.

Mr Tomlinson: I'm sorry, could you repeat your last question, sir?

Mr O'Toole: Is the role of the trustee going to be defined in regulation?

Mr Tomlinson: The present bill doesn't provide for that, nor am I aware of government motions which —

Mr O'Toole: How is that going to get defined?

Mrs McLeod: There would have to be changes to the Education Act.

Mr Tomlinson: I think that's the correct answer, that there would have to be a change to the Education Act for that to happen.

Mr O'Toole: That would be further legislation, then.

Mr Tomlinson: Other than informally the ministry sending out information or other groups sending out information as to what they saw the role of the trustee was under the present legislation, what areas the trustees should be concentrating their efforts on, as opposed to other areas where legally they could. But from a policy point of view, it would be considered that maybe it's not the best priority. For example, information could go out indicating to trustees that maybe it's better to spend less time in hands-on management of minor details and more concentration on education policy, that kind of thing. But that wouldn't be something that would have legal effect. For something to have legal effect, of course, you'd have to amend the act.

Mr Skarica: I have to admit that I'm in agreement with the comments of Mr Wildman, which makes me very nervous that I'm missing something. One of the problems I see is there's no definition of "students," but I think that's a pretty weak argument, so I intend to vote for the amendment.

Mr McLean: Could I have a clarification? Do we have any senior elementary and secondary schools?

The Chair: Who are you directing that question to?

Mr McLean: The ministry staff.

The Chair: Mr Tomlinson, are you in a position to answer that?

Mr Tomlinson: I'm sorry, I was just reading the amendment. Would you repeat the question?

Mr McLean: The question is with regard to senior elementary and secondary schools. Is that a definition? Do some boards have that as a definition?

Interjection: Grades 7 and 8.

Mr McLean: Do we already have it as a definition now?

Mr Tomlinson: As a definition for what particular purpose would that be?

Mr McLean: Senior elementary. I know there are elementary schools, but I didn't know there were definitions of it.

The Chair: The question is, is there such a thing in the Education Act as "senior elementary schools."

Mr Tomlinson: I'm not aware of that being in the act, but it doesn't mean it might not be in documents of the ministry.

The Chair: Any further debate on this amendment?

All in favour? Opposed? The amendment is carried.

We move on to the next amendment.

Mr Skarica: I move that subsection 327(3) of the Education Act, as set out in section 7 of the bill, be amended by adding the following clause:

"(d.1) the transfer of assets, including but not limited to real and personal property, the transfer of liabilities and the transfer of employees of existing boards to district school boards."

The proposed amendment relates to the dispute resolution mechanism which is coming in a couple of pages. This proposed amendment would add a clause to authorize the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations providing for the transfer of assets, liabilities and employees from existing boards to new district school boards. We heard throughout the hearings that there were no real rules dealing with what was going to happen to employees in the dispute resolution mechanism. Some clarity is added to that concern.

Mrs McLeod: I believe this is another of the areas the government forgot when it was drafting its original legislation, just as students were somehow missed out in the representation on boards. As I understand it, this then gives the Lieutenant Governor in Council, in other words, cabinet, total and absolute power to make regulations regarding the transfer of all assets, all liabilities and all staff of existing boards.

The Chair: Are you asking a question or just stating your view?

Mrs McLeod: I'm asking to confirm; that's my understanding of what this amendment does.

Mr Skarica: It does, subject to the proposed amendment that's coming forward on page 13.

Mrs McLeod: I understand that. I do believe this would not have had precedents in prior amalgamations and that it's the sweeping nature of what the government intends to do that makes this total control necessary.

Mr Skarica: No, it's not page 13. I'm sorry.

Mrs McLeod: I know the reference.

Mr Wildman: Actually, that's the question I was going to ask, just if Mr Skarica could tell us the page number of the amendment.

1530

Mr Skarica: Page 18.

The Chair: Take a moment to refer to page 18.

Mr Duncan: As I understand this, and perhaps the parliamentary assistant can correct me, this gives the Lieutenant Governor in Council, that is, the cabinet, the right to override all collective agreements.

Mr Skarica: That's not my interpretation of it.

Mr Duncan: Can you tell me how that doesn't happen by this?

Mr Skarica: If we go to (8.8), on page 18b, the current employment contracts and benefits basically get transferred to the merged school board.

Ms Lankin: Which section is that?

Mr Skarica: That would be (8.7).

The Chair: It's on page 18b, for members who haven't found it yet.

Mr Duncan: Could I put a question to counsel? I would see those two, then — clearly the government intends that these work together, but I see them working contrary to one another. If in this section you provide the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations providing for "the transfer of assets," da, da, da, da, "the transfer of employees of existing boards to district school boards," what section of the bill would we look to in the case where there is a dispute, say, on seniority?

Mr Tomlinson: Which section of the —

Mr Duncan: Which of these two sections that you deal with in these proposed amendments — as I understand what the parliamentary assistant said, the two amendments are designed to work hand in hand.

Mr Tomlinson: That's right.

Mr Duncan: As I understand them, not having read completely through that amendment on page 18b, because we didn't get it until 1 o'clock this afternoon —

Mr Wildman: It's (8.6) on 18b.

Mr Duncan: I see that. The question's still valid. Even in spite of the proposed amendment, can the cabinet not then simply step in where a dispute cannot be resolved and override a collective agreement?

Mr Tomlinson: You start off with the first proposed amendment which allows the regulation to provide for the transfer of assets and employees. You then go to (8.6), that in making the regulations, the regulation has to ensure that all employees of existing boards are transferred to district school boards, so they're all going to go to one district school board or another. Then you get to the (8.7), which says statutorily, "Here's the rule that applies once they get there," and in particular in paragraph 2, basically all their employment rights continue.

The one wrinkle you'll have, of course, is you'll have separate groups of teachers from separate boards who will

end up at the new board and each of those, say, three separate groups will have their own collective agreement rights that have gone with them, which is okay within that group, but when you ask how they relate to the other groups of teachers who are now with that board, there's no answer in this bill. It's intended that in the next bill it would be dealt with as far as the collective bargaining and the harmonization of the agreements and that type of thing.

Ms Lankin: Some further clarification. As I understand it, the amendment that's before us which gives the regulation-making power with respect to matters of transfers of assets, including property liabilities and transfer of employees — I understand legal counsel's clarifications with respect to transfer of employees and how once the transfer takes place there are statutory guidelines that must be followed.

I would like it if you could walk us through the restrictions that are put in place on transfer of assets and liabilities. As I read very quickly here, it appears that in the other sections they are more permissive. In the amendments, on pages 18, 18a and 18b, with respect to assets and liabilities, they are permissive clauses which allow for, for example, processes that might be set out or continuation of legal or other proceedings that may occur. It's a complicated interrelationship between the two sections that we're dealing with here, and given that these have just been provided to us, we haven't had a chance to see them, could you give us an explanation of those other sections?

Mr Tomlinson: Yes, I'll attempt to give a fairly brief explanation, if I can. You start off, again, with that basic first amendment that would authorize the making of a regulation to transfer the real property, or just all property and assets, which is basically all property and all assets and all liabilities. You then go to (8.1) and it talks about what things may be included in the regulation. Subsection (8.1) deals mostly with processes that the regulation can set out for following in order to end up with the decision as to what assets go where.

In this regard it's instructive to look at (8.6), which sets out the conditions that the Lieutenant Governor has to follow when she approves the regulation for transferring the property. What she has to do, in clause (b), is "ensure that all assets, liabilities and employees" do get transferred. We can't leave anything behind — they have to go to one new district board or another — and she has to "have regard to the needs of each district school board." In other words, there has to be regard to the area that that new board was serving, the number of kids who were going to be going to the schools and where they were located in the area.

Ms Lankin: Where is that set out?

Mr Tomlinson: This would come under clause (a), "have regard to the needs of each district school board." That would be implicit in that, I think.

I think the intention would be that the regulation itself, since it's fairly general, would deal with the clear situations. For example, if you have an existing board that may have one school used entirely for French kids, the regulation might say that schools of existing boards that are used entirely for French-language instructional

purposes automatically go to the new district French-language board as opposed to the new district English-language board. That's an easy case. That can be dealt with in the regulation; similarly with the schools that are entirely for English-language kids. Presumably the regulation in general would keep the separate school property within the separate school system and the public school property within the public school system.

To deal with situations that are difficult, where there's a mixture of kids in schools, part French, part English, or in some cases part separate school kids and part public school kids in a school, you would move on to (8.2). The regulation would delegate powers to the commission to deal with these difficult cases and make guidelines, but it could set controls on what the commission could do and how it could do it.

Ms Lankin: If I may, I think what flows from that, under those other sections, is continued refinement with respect to the assigning of powers and duties to the Education Improvement Commission and examples of rules that may be specified and criteria. You've already addressed the criteria.

Then on page 18c: "(8.8) An order or directive of the EIC...may be filed in the Ontario Court," and "(8.9) An order or directive that is filed...shall be enforceable as if it were an order of the Ontario Court," and "(8.10) Orders and directives of the EIC under this section are final and shall not be reviewed or questioned in any court."

The whole controversy with respect to the role of appointed boards, arm's-length boards of trustees, whether it be the Education Improvement Commission or, in another piece of legislation that we'll see amendments to tomorrow, a board of trustees, and their decisions being final or being reviewable by courts has not been addressed in this section. It hasn't been addressed in any other section of the legislation.

1540

Interjection: It has been.

Ms Lankin: Could you just explain to me what it means? Why this section? My understanding was that you had put limits on the role of the EIC and opened up the issue of reviewability of their decisions. Why is this section set out in a different way?

Mr Tomlinson: As you perhaps have noticed with the motions, it's proposed that the general provision which would have excluded the courts from reviewing any decision of the EIC be removed. The reason it was kept in for this one area is basically that it was felt that the effect of putting in a provision like that assists in minimizing the number of at least vexatious lawsuits. The idea was that it was very important that this process — the transfer of assets, the transfer of employees — be as efficient as possible so that once we got to January, the kids would know what school they were entitled to go to and what teachers they were going to have. That's what I think it comes down to. Because the efficiency of the process was essential in order to accomplish that, we felt it was justifiable in precluding the review of the courts.

I think the other point was, this is a matter, the transfer of schools and so on, which is something that judges don't have a lot of expertise in. It was felt, I think, that

maybe there was justification from that point of view as well.

This would not preclude somebody from going for a judicial review if the commission acted — well, they could go at any time they wanted, but it would not preclude the court from considering it and stopping the commission from doing something if the commission were clearly acting outside of what the regulation said it could do. Remember, we said the regulation can put all kinds of controls on the commission and how it acts. If it doesn't act properly according to the regulation, the court can stop it. As well, if it's doing something that the court considers extremely unfair for whatever reason, the courts just ignore these clauses. That tends to be the result.

Mr Wildman: I won't prolong this, but I want to relate what was just said to the amendment, (d.1), and use a couple of examples that might be helpful.

In many parts of Ontario now there are school buildings — secondary schools in particular, although there are some elementary as well — which house two schools: a French school and an English school. In many cases these are under separate school board jurisdiction, but in some cases they're under public boards as well. The commission is going to have to deal with the transfer of assets. The question is, what do you do with one building that houses two schools?

I suppose they might decide that the building would stay with the new amalgamated separate English board or public English board and there might be some sort of lease agreement that the new French board would have with that board. That agreement would have to be worked out subsequently.

Mr Tomlinson: In fact, I think, Mr Wildman, that the commission would have the flexibility to order that. If it wanted the school to go to one board but the other board to have the lease, I think it could order that, yes.

Mr Wildman: Okay, but that then is not subject to judicial review.

Mr Tomlinson: Or it could order that the school go jointly to both boards.

Mr Wildman: But that is not subject to judicial review if that were an order issued by the EIC. If there were an order that said that this asset should remain with the English public board, and for whatever reason the French board felt it would be better within their ownership, they wouldn't have any right of appeal.

Mr Tomlinson: Presumably the regulation would build in a process whereby certainly they could make their disagreement known to the commission before the commission made its order final, but the intent of that provision would be that the court would be excluded, as I say, unless the commission acted outside of the process that the regulation set down or unless there was something completely unfair about it or unless there was some constitutional element that came in, because nothing that can be done here, of course, can infringe on the Constitution.

Mr Wildman: I don't want to get into the constitutional issue. Can I use another example? Currently there's a Dufferin-Peel board and it's being proposed that the Dufferin part of it be taken away from that board and amalgamated with Wellington. Correct?

Mr Tomlinson: I understood there has been talk of that, yes.

Mr Wildman: It's on the maps that are in the compendium.

Mr Tomlinson: I don't think anything is final yet. Actually, I think we have a member from the section here who —

Mr Wildman: I think it's in the maps, and it was a matter that was brought before the committee when we were in Midhurst. If the commission came to the conclusion, "All right, Dufferin is now going to be with Wellington and we'll transfer these schools and this amount" — let's say they have a reserve fund and so they take a percentage of the reserve fund of the Dufferin-Peel board and transfer that to the new board, and the Peel separate board does not think they have been treated fairly; too much of their reserve fund has been taken and transferred to this other new board. What can they do?

Mr Tomlinson: Number one, if we're at the end of the process with the commission — as I've said, the commission does deal with the situation, and if it has made its final order and there is a disagreement, the board, of course, can apply for judicial review. It's just a question of a judge looking at it, and if he feels, as I have said, that the situation is obviously unfair, judges tend to ignore that type of clause.

Mr Wildman: Then I don't understand something, and maybe it's just because I'm not learned in the law, but if you're saying that they could go to the judge —

Mr Tomlinson: Anybody can always go to a judge. I think it's the next step that's important.

Mr Wildman: Then why do you have this in here? Why do you say, "Orders and directives of the Education Improvement Commission under this section are final and shall not be reviewed or questioned in any court," if in fact you can go to the court and ask for review and question the orders of the commission? If you can do that anyway, why have you got this in here?

Mr Tomlinson: That doesn't deal with whether you can go to the court. That's the first step. It deals with whether the judge basically is going to deal with your application, think about it and possibly make a decision in your favour.

Ms Lankin: If I can jump in to make this clearer, this certainly would set a little bit of a higher barrier for someone to get over to get the judge to consider their complaint, wouldn't it?

Mr Tomlinson: That's basically what it does.

Ms Lankin: I thought that was basically what it did.

Mr Tomlinson: To go right back to the beginning, it was felt that it's justifiable to set that slightly higher barrier in this case so that the kids, when January comes, know what school they're going to and what teacher they're going to have. I think it was decided in the interest of that it was important.

Mr Duncan: Having just received these at 1 o'clock, I find it difficult in any event to understand everything, but I'll make a prediction about what these amendments in their entirety do. I think these are the first step in province-wide bargaining.

If you read it in light of the section on page 16 of the bill itself where it talks about the powers of the Educa-

tion Improvement Commission, I think what you're seeing here in your amendment (8.6), "(a) have regard to the needs of each district school board" and "(b) ensure that all assets, liabilities and employees of existing boards are transferred to district school boards," it deals with what Tom Wells found in the Essex county case. That is, notionally, that if you go ahead with amalgamation, you won't get necessarily a lower-cost situation, but costs particularly associated with collective agreements will go up, because the lower-cost boards will be drawn up.

What this does is prescribe, much the way you did with arbitration, that the EIC and cabinet can therefore take into consideration the ability of the poorer school board to pay. So what you're doing in my view is you are fundamentally taking away the right to collectively bargain for teachers, and I think this is the first step. You indicated that there is more legislation, and I think you're forcing the government to consider those scenarios and that's what the intention of all these amendments is.

1550

Again, I was having trouble following some of this complicated stuff because I've only had it since 1 o'clock, but when you read this in light of page 16 of the bill where it deals with section 335 of the Education Act and also subsection (3), what the EIC can do, clause (e), I think what you're doing is dealing with what Wells found in Essex county and you're in effect taking away the right of teachers to collectively bargain.

I think that will be confirmed in the following — you shake your head no, but just read it very carefully: "the Lieutenant Governor in Council" — ie cabinet — "have regard to the needs of each district school board." That is a limitation on what you provided in your first amendment that gives cabinet the right to make regulation with respect to the transfer of employees of existing boards to district school boards. Those limitations are there, so what it's saying very clearly, in my view, is that you will have to deal with those situations, and I'll make a prediction right now that you're going to have, first of all, a bill that deals with the Paroian recommendations, because you did indicate in your original response to me that more of this would be coming out in the next legislation. I'll make a prediction now that this is laying the groundwork for that, and it's basically saying that the commission or the cabinet have the right to take into consideration the ability of the poorer board to pay.

I think what you're doing is you're not even solving your own dilemma. You're going to have a mess with collective agreements all over this province, because where these amalgamations are occurring, there are huge problems, huge discrepancies. That's why I think you can't look at it in isolation of either province-wide or regional bargaining at all, and when you do take away the right to strike, what this tells me is that you're giving direction to the cabinet and to the EIC to take into consideration the ability of the poorer board to pay the same costs. Again, I don't know a lot of these complicated things, but in Windsor-Essex county, the Windsor boards are assessment-rich and have been able to negotiate more generous collective agreements than the county. This is going to, in my view, force the higher down, and it also tells me that the next step is going to be taking

away the right to strike. It's going to also take away, in my view, the right to collective bargaining.

Mrs McLeod: My frustration is reaching almost unmanageable levels. We are now debating a motion which is related to the motion that is actually before us. Both motions are substantive in what they bring to the bill. They both, in my view, represent major areas which the government failed to address in its haste to bring forward this legislation. I am appreciative of the fact that at least there is some effort now to provide some initial protection to the contracts of staff who as of December 1997 are not going to have their existing employers.

I am distressed by the fact that the motion plays what is in my view a shell game by appearing to make the EIC no longer above the law but in fact giving it powers of compulsory arbitration over its own decisions, which I think is what is achieved with (8.10).

I don't know that there is much point in continuing to debate it. This is something which should have been before us in the original bill. It's something which should have been the subject of consultation with those who are affected by it, which are the boards holding the assets and liabilities and the employers and employees of those boards that are most directly affected. All of those individuals have expressed concerns to us about the lack of any protection for assets, liabilities and for employees on the transfer. The government has clearly understood that it missed that, and so now, at 4 o'clock, when we have significant other amendments that we have to deal with, we are attempting to understand a major piece of this legislation. I guess we will just have to take on faith that it's better than what was in the act before, or not in the act before.

The Chair: Mr Wildman.

Mr Wildman: I'll defer to Ms Lankin.

Ms Lankin: Actually, I had a further question, and then perhaps Mr Wildman would like to contribute some thoughts on this. This is to Mr Skarica. I believe the minister has come to the conclusion that the powers of the Education Improvement Commission should not be unfettered, that they should not be without a process of judicial review. Although I hear ministry counsel's suggestions of the reasons for setting out that these particular decisions with respect to transfer of assets, liabilities and property and employees should not be reviewable, I fail to understand the distinction being made here.

It seems to that in some of these areas the nature of disagreement or the sense of aggrievement on the part of individual parties may well warrant an airing and some finality of outside review and that that would be good for the process. I think it's consistent with the direction that your government is taking with respect to other aspects of this legislation and with respect to, as we know, another major piece of legislation, Bill 103, which we expect to see amendments on tomorrow.

Could you tell us why it is so necessary to limit the public's access to judicial review in this section? If it is not so necessary, could we find a way to reach an agreement that the rest of this amendment stands, but that perhaps in committee of the whole we will agree to delete (8.10)?

Mr Skarica: My understanding is that the way it was worded before, as we heard virtually every place we went, is that there were unfettered powers, as you indicated, and there were no appeal rights. What we've tried to do through these amendments is to fetter the commission and at the same time give appeal rights, except for the three areas included in (8.10), but even then the powers wouldn't be absolute any longer because there will be regulations as to what they can or can't do. Obviously, if they're outside of those powers, the prohibitive clauses would not prevent anyone from challenging what the commission is doing in court. That, in a nutshell, is what we're trying to accomplish.

Ms Lankin: I do understand that the regulations will set out restrictions on those powers and that if the Education Improvement Commission acts outside of those powers as set out in the regulations, its decisions or its actions would be reviewable. Fine. What I am concerned about is the decisions within those powers being reviewable. It strikes me that the very fact that the legislation sets out its powers and responsibilities and sets out directions to it is a protection to the Education Improvement Commission in and of itself. If there is a party that seeks judicial review of its actions or its decision, the court will have regard to the powers and the responsibilities of the EIC as has been set out in the legislation. We're sort of talking both sides of the same coin here.

The question is whether you fall on the side of providing an opportunity to parties who are being substantially reorganized, restructured, and whose assets over years of dedicated work have been built up, the question of whether they have a right to challenge how those are being dispersed. I would think we would want to err on the side of giving that right of challenge and allowing the courts to determine whether there are sufficient grounds in the application that's been brought forward.

Mr Skarica: Again, it's hard to anticipate with precision what exactly is going to happen in the future. As I understand it, the legislation is designed — before, the criticism was, they could do basically whatever they wanted, and now there will be rules set out in regulation as to what they can or can't do so everybody will know what they can or can't do. Those rules will come as a result of Mr Cooke and Ms Vanstone giving recommendations to the minister and cabinet. That's not going to happen until there's consultation with the people affected.

Mr Wildman: My understanding in dealing with the amendment that's before us, a government amendment to section 7, is that this is to try and avoid the scenario where there would be complete chaos in January, so that we would know which schools were going to belong to which boards, which employees were going to be working for which boards. The accompanying amendment that we've been discussing along with it on page 18 would delineate how that might happen and with regard to employees, they would know that their existing collective agreements would continue in force.

The big question that faces everyone, I guess, is what happens after that. That relates to the new funding formula that is coming out and also relates to whether there will be negotiations between bargaining agents and

the new boards with regard to the merging of collective agreements dealing with redundancies, dealing with seniority, dealing with early retirements in some cases and dealing with levels of pay and benefits. We can't deal with that in this bill, and that's why we object to the fact that we are dealing with this before we know what the new funding formula is. But at least this amendment will make it possible for employees and students and parents to know before January 1, 1998, where they're going to be as of that date.

Mr Skarica: That's right. We heard that concern throughout the hearings and we tried to address that.
1600

Mrs McLeod: It will not avoid chaos. If you want just one example of what will happen as they start to determine what this actually means, and I think my colleague used the example of seniority, there will be literally hundreds of people with a new employer who have exactly the same seniority rights and they are somehow going to have to be ranked in terms of who has the seniority that supersedes somebody else who has exactly the same seniority with the earlier board. Those kinds of disputes are going to be impossible to resolve. What this does, though, is at least make sure that as of January 1 they are legally employed by somebody.

The Chair: Any further debate on this amendment? All in favour of the amendment? Opposed? The amendment is carried.

We move to further amendments.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, I will withdraw this because once again it has to do with holding off the elections, until the year 2000, of the new district boards. I believe that then leads to subsection 327(3).

I move that subsection 327(3) of the Education Act, as set out in section 7 of the bill, be amended by adding the following clause:

"(d.1) means of ensuring that an elector, student, parent or teacher in a geographic area represented by a member of a district school board can communicate with that member without incurring greater cost than would be necessary if the member were in the same locality."

It is clearly within the powers of the cabinet to make regulations ensuring that this would be addressed. It's an attempt to put some framework for looking at the board boundaries and to deal with the concerns we heard repeatedly that some of the board boundaries are so excessively large that it is going to be virtually impossible for individual constituents, members of a community, to communicate with their elected trustee. We felt that one of the ways in which you could have a guideline that the cabinet and the EIC could consider would be to look at the whole question of cost. If there are significant travel costs that would have to be incurred, long-distance costs in telephone communication, that's something that should be taken into consideration.

Mr Skarica: We have a resolution that we're going to ask the EIC to look at the problem as delineated by Ms McLeod, and I would prefer to leave it to the commission to make recommendations after looking at the committee hearings and any other information it receives.

Ms Lankin: In response to that, Mr Skarica, I point out that this is a permissive clause that's set out in a

section that allows the Lieutenant Governor to make regulations. It doesn't say the Lieutenant Governor "shall"; it says "may." Like in many other areas, we will eagerly await the recommendations from the Education Improvement Commission. I'm sure that will give shape to the cabinet decision of what goes into the regulation that the LG puts forward. It's not inconsistent with your preferred direction.

The Chair: Further debate? Seeing none, all in favour? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

Mr Duncan: We withdraw the amendment that's on page 7a because again it goes back to the timing, which was already defeated.

I would move the amendment put on page 8, a packet of amendments that the Lieutenant Governor in Council:

"(i) rules to ensure that the replacement of existing boards by district school boards will not have the effect of reducing funding or eligibility for special education programs."

Again this provides a framework with respect to special education, that cabinet may make regulations to provide for this "to ensure that the replacement of existing boards by district...boards will not have the effect of reducing funding or eligibility for special education programs." It simply attempts to set the parameters under which cabinet can make regulation.

Mr Skarica: Again it's the same. This will be dealt with in upcoming legislation to deal with the funding formula, and it's our suggestion that it would be redundant.

The Chair: Any further debate? All in favour of the amendment? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

We have a further amendment, Mr Duncan.

Mr Duncan: Yes, on page 9 of the packet that has been distributed.

I move that subsection 327(3) of the Education Act, as set out in section 7 of the bill, be amended by adding the following clause:

"(j) rules to ensure that the replacement of existing boards by district school boards does not threaten existing programs offered at schools and that those programs are maintained."

Again it deals with the notion of setting parameters by which cabinet can make regulations.

The Chair: Further debate? All in favour of the amendment? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

The next amendment, Mr Duncan.

Mr Duncan: Page 10 in the packet.

I move that subsection 327(3) of the Education Act, as set out in section 7 of the bill, be amended by adding the following clause:

"(k) rules to ensure that the replacement of existing boards by district school boards does not lead to a reduction in classroom funding for schools within the jurisdiction of those boards."

Again this tries to set the parameters in which the Lieutenant Governor in Council, that is, the cabinet, may prescribe regulations. It is our view that cabinet should have the ability to make regulations when these amalgamations happen, but that they don't necessarily lead to a reduction in classroom funding for schools within the jurisdiction of the new district boards.

Mr Wildman: We would agree with this amendment. There has been a lot of discussion about harmonization and ensuring that each student has equal opportunity in Ontario.

We hope against hope, and we hope it is not a forlorn hope, that this harmonization will mean that each student in Ontario will have the same opportunity as those students who are now being served by boards that are so-called assessment-rich, that we're not going to harmonize downward to the point where people who have had programs in the past in their classrooms will see these cut because we're harmonizing to a lower point than other boards have experienced. We want to bring everyone up to the best possible level, not to move everybody downwards.

The Chair: Further debate? All in favour of this amendment? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

The next amendment, Ms McLeod.

1610

Mrs McLeod: I move that subsection 327(3) of the Education Act, as set out in section 7 of the bill, be amended by adding the following clause:

"(1) the authority for district school boards to generate 10% of their revenue through the property tax base so long as the money is used for local enrichment programs."

If I may speak to it, this is clearly a substantive motion. I put it forward, though, because I am genuinely concerned that what we are going to see is a loss of local governance and local decision-making. This motion is very similar to a recommendation of the Crombie commission. The Crombie commission, I will acknowledge, had suggested that there be a 5% discretionary local levy over and above what government would direct as the appropriate funding for education. I've suggested that should be 10% because it was 10% which was recommended to us by a number of presenters to committee who said, "At least leave that much on the local mill rate so that there can be some local flexibility to address local needs."

Clearly, it's presented in the belief that the government is going to move to changes in education funding. Clearly, we wish we knew what the education funding model was going to be before dealing with this, but I believe it's important that we make the case that there should be at least some discretionary funding flexibility left to these local boards and therefore I put forward this amendment.

Mr Wildman: I'm in support of this, largely because it's in line with what Mr Crombie recommended. To be honest with you, if we weren't in a straitjacket, I would suggest that we put a period after the word "base." I wouldn't limit it simply for local enrichment programs, I would allow boards to raise taxes for whatever needs of students they deemed fit, but I understand the reason for the amendment.

Mrs McLeod: A function of doing amendments at midnight.

Mr Wildman: I support the motion.

Mr Skarica: The government's position is that it wishes to move away from this type of taxation. Experience in Ontario has been that the range of spending on

students is anywhere from \$4,000 to \$9,000 per student and often it depends not on student needs but on the resources available to the various boards. It's the government's intention to address problems of equity through the upcoming funding model as opposed to having the boards tax through the property tax base.

The Chair: Further debate? All in favour of the amendment? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

Further amendment, Mr Wildman, page 12.

Mr Wildman: I move that section 327 of the Education Act, as set out in section 7 of the bill, be amended by adding the following subsection:

"Areas of jurisdiction

"(3.1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council shall not make a regulation under clause (3)(b) without first giving each of the existing boards a copy of a draft of the regulation and ensuring that each of them approves of the new boundaries for any district school board whose area of jurisdiction includes part of its area of jurisdiction."

The reason for this is simple. We believe in local autonomy. The existing boards are elected to represent the ratepayers in their districts. They are to speak for them with regard to education matters. If the government is determined to move forward with amalgamations, it seems reasonable that it should consult first with the existing boards to determine whether the new boundaries are reasonable and to ensure that the existing boards, the members of which, the trustees, represent the local communities, the parents and the students, agree. If they don't agree, then what we're suggesting is that the Lieutenant Governor in Council would have to go back to the drawing board and ensure that they redrew the boundaries in such a way that they were reasonable.

To use an example, when we were in Ottawa we heard representation from people from Lanark, Leeds and Grenville, Prescott and Russell, and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. All of those local existing boards took the position that they were not opposed to amalgamation but they wanted the amalgamations that had been proposed by Mr Sweeney, not the amalgamations that are currently under consideration. Mr Sweeney had suggested two boards in that area. The current proposal is that there only be one board. It seems to me that it's reasonable that we listen to the local boards and we ensure that we follow their wishes since they represent the people of the region and the area.

Mrs McLeod: I support the amendment as it's presented. Should by chance it not be supported by the government, we have an amendment which attempts to accomplish something similar but which is based on precedent of government's existing legislation as it relates to municipal amalgamation. I would speak to that — it's on page 25 — at the appropriate time.

The Chair: Thank you. I'd appreciate it.

Mrs Johns: In listening to the explanation by Mr Wildman, I believe this particular amendment brings forward the height of the status quo: "If we don't want to change, we don't have to change here." I think it's important for us to recognize that, although people agree across the province that we should change the boards and do things, I don't think that we can always go to all municipal clerks, secretaries and existing board trustees

and expect to get a consensus on where this might lead. If we followed through on this transaction and waited to everyone to agree, as we know from past history, it would not allow us to do that. If I'm misunderstanding what you're saying, Mr Wildman, please explain to me, but that's what I thought you said.

Mr Wildman: Actually, I don't think in principle you're misunderstanding what I said, but I think you're talking it a little further than I suggested.

Mrs Johns: I'm just explaining how I see it working in the system.

Mr Wildman: We're not suggesting you go to each municipal clerk.

Mrs Johns: That's what it says, Mr Wildman. Under (b) it says, "to municipal clerks, secretaries and existing boards and others." I don't know who the others might be that you're suggesting we work with under (3)(b) but I think that would lead us to a time frame where we would never be able to move to consolidate school boards.

Mr Wildman: I'm sorry, am I missing something here? It says, "(3)(b) without first giving each of the existing boards a copy of a draft of the regulation and ensuring that each of them approves of the new boundaries...." It doesn't say anything about municipal clerks.

Mrs Johns: I might be in the wrong section, Mr Wildman, not you.

The Chair: Would you refer us to what page you're looking at, Mrs Johns?

Mrs Johns: I was in the bill.

Mr Wildman: I think you did understand the principle, but you were taking it further than I was proposing. I'm talking about the boards, not the —

Mrs McLeod: So now we look forward to your support.

Mrs Johns: No, I'm still saying that to get approval of every trustee within the boards is a monumental task, and I have to look and see what (3)(b) says.

Mr Wildman: No, I'm not suggesting every trustee. I'm suggesting the board. They usually vote by a majority to determine what their decisions are. I'm not suggesting we have to have unanimity among the trustees, just majority vote.

The Chair: Thank you. I think it's sufficiently clarified. Any further debate? All in favour of the motion? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

Moving on to Mr Wildman again.

1620

Mr Wildman: Section 7 of the bill:

I move that section 327 of the Education Act, as set in section 7 of the bill, be amended by adding the following subsection:

"Public consultation

"(4.1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council shall not make a regulation under subsection (3) without first doing the following:

"1. Preparing and making available to the public a draft regulation.

"2. Giving notice of the draft regulation to the public in a manner that it will come to the attention of interested people in all parts of Ontario.

"3. Providing in the notice that the draft regulation is available for review and comment by members of the

public, informing members of the public of where and how to acquire a free copy of it, inviting members of the public to make written submissions concerning the regulation, asking members of the public if they would like to participate in a public hearing concerning the regulation and informing them of where to send their written submissions and their request for a public hearing.

"4. Allowing members of the public at least 30 days after the notice is given to make written representations concerning the regulation or to request a public hearing.

"5. If at least 10 people request a public hearing, giving at least three weeks' notice of a public hearing and holding a public hearing.

"6. Considering any written and oral representations of members of the public before making a final regulation."

This is patterned on the process that is currently followed with regard to changes in the municipal boundaries, and it seems to me that it's reasonable that we follow the same process with regard to school boards.

Mrs McLeod: Once again, we will support this motion. Should it not be successful — although it should be because it is simply due process and process which is currently followed, as Mr Wildman has said, in any major municipal amalgamation — should it not pass, we have a number of other motions which will attempt to bring into a more open forum for some consultation the specific decisions that are going to be made in establishing the new board boundaries.

Mr Duncan: This amendment, as both of my colleagues have said, simply attempts to establish a process that would ensure public input, public consultation in these matters. It's unfortunate that this even has to be brought forward, but because we're beginning to run out of time on discussion of the bill in its entirety, I think it needs to be re-emphasized that this motion, along with a number of others the opposition is bringing forward, simply attempts to provide a framework by which there can be better and fuller consultation on changes that, by anybody's reckoning, are both far-reaching and extraordinary.

Mrs Johns: I'd like to comment on this. I think we are aware that throughout the process Mr Skarica brought forward a motion that asked the EIC to consider some of the boundaries, as we heard during the hearings, and so we know the EIC will be cognizant of that issue.

I'd also like to suggest that when the other two parties were in government regulations were at that point gazetted, I believe. We will continue on the same philosophy as you people did with regulations and gazette them so that people know what we're talking about when we're talking about putting forward regulations.

Mr O'Toole: Just to support, I'll pose a question to Mr Wildman. It was his party that commissioned the Sweeney process to consult very broadly, and they did, and an insurmountable amount of material in evidence and opinion and draft was provided. Would he concur that was a great deal of consultation that did not, by the way, conform to the current process of amending municipal boundaries? Why did they not respect that process and does he respect the process they put in place?

The Chair: Mr O'Toole, I'm not sure this really speaks to the amendment. If Mr Wildman wants to respond, he may.

Mr Wildman: If I could respond, I would make two points. First, we know that the boundaries as proposed by Bill 104 are not the proposals that Mr Sweeney made after his consultation. For instance, in Leeds-Grenville, Lanark, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, and Prescott and Russell, Sweeney proposed two boards. The proposal here is for one. There are many other instances of that across the province. That's number one.

Number two, the Sweeney consultation did not go through to fruition. When this government was elected, one of the first things they did was cut off the public consultation part of Mr Sweeney's consultation. In the fall, he was supposed to go around and hold public meetings across Ontario. The new Minister of Education said to him: "No, don't do that. Simply request the public to phone in or send in letters or send in faxes to you to get their opinions." He didn't hold public hearings, so this is to make up for the fact that this government cut short the Sweeney consultation.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate Mr Wildman clarifying the fact that what is before us is not Sweeney's recommendations, because there have been a number of times in which the committee has had reference to Mr Sweeney as if this simply was enacting Mr Sweeney's recommendations on board boundaries; it's not. But the issue of the consultation on the proposed board boundaries and the way in which trustees will be appointed or elected to those boards is even more basic than that.

First, I think committee members have been persuaded that the initial response on the board boundaries has raised some concerns and that they would expect the EIC to look at those concerns, so that we're not dealing with board boundaries which are set in stone. That's an assumption I make based on the responsiveness people have had. What this is saying is that once the board boundaries are defined in the way that is going to be put forward, there should be some opportunity to consult on those.

Second, many aspects of the numbers of trustees and how they're to be elected are not yet confirmed and there should be some opportunity to consult on that. Those are both part of the section Mr Wildman's amendment relates to.

I was told, for example, that there's already a directive from the ministry that says the clerk of the largest community will decide the area each trustee will represent. Now that is going to cause a lot of gnashing of teeth in some of the smaller communities that are going to be affected by this.

There are a lot of unanswered questions and a lot of incomplete information that really requires some further consultation.

Last, I point out that what we were consulting on with our committee hearings was not just the specific board boundaries, nor the overall numbers of trustees; it was the entire piece, and it wasn't a terribly focussed consultation. I think these amalgamations are sweeping enough that they deserve that kind of very specific —

The Chair: Thank you. Any further debate? Very well, I'll put the question. All in favour of the amendment? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

The next amendment, Mrs McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: Sometimes it's actually easier to be members of an opposition so that you can at least put things that you know are right. I see nods of assent across the room, but I don't see any votes in support. There's some giant whip somewhere out here. I can feel its presence over this entire room. Nevertheless, I shall continue this exercise in futility and place the next motion.

The Chair: Have faith, Mrs McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: "I move that subsection 327(6) of the Education Act, as set out in section 7 of the bill, be struck out and the following substituted:

"Number of members on a district school board

"(6)A regulation under subclause 3(d)(i),

"(a)shall not provide for fewer than five members on any district school board;

"(b)shall provide at least one member on any district school board for every 4,500 pupils of the board; and

"(c)subject to clause (b), shall not provide for more than 22 members on any district school board."

I place the motion because I am truly concerned that in addition to geographic size of some boards, we have some boards that are going to be so huge in terms of numbers of pupils that there simply cannot be adequate representation. I think this amendment would address some of the concerns that have been raised by public boards that have said we have a lot more students to serve with the same number of trustees and the same number of boards than separate boards have. I think if we looked at what is a reasonable student population to be served by each trustee, we'd have a guideline that was based on something other than just numbers pulled out of a hat.

Mr Skarica: I have a question. Then for Toronto, there would be how many trustees?

Mrs McLeod: I haven't done the calculation on that. I think it would be based on what one of the larger boards would have now.

Mr Wildman: We support the amendment.

Mr Skarica: It would be approximately 70 trustees in Toronto.

Interjection.

Mr Skarica: Maybe 700.

Mrs McLeod: No, I don't think that's correct, Mr Skarica. I think it's based on essentially trustee representation in large boards.

The Chair: Thank you. All in favour of the amendment? Opposed? The motion is defeated.

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Mr Wildman: I think this is one we all can support.

I move that subsection 327(6) of the Education Act, as set out in section 7 of the bill, be amended by inserting the word "elected" after the word "five" in the third line.

The purpose of this amendment is to ensure, it's quite clear, that the appointed members of a board, for instance, native representatives or students, are in addition to the elected members, so that it's clear that when it's set out in numbers in the bill, that there be between five and 12, we're not including the appointed members in those numbers, that they are in addition to the elected members.

Mrs McLeod: I think we might like to facilitate debate by recognizing that this NDP motion, the govern-

ment's next motion and the motion after that which will be placed by the New Democrats are all consistent and say essentially the same thing, which is to ensure that appointed members, as determined by cabinet, are in addition to the numbers of elected members.

The Chair: I thank you for that.

Mrs Johns: I just have a question about this. Given that we have already moved that students would be considered trustees and would probably be appointed by their peers, I don't know how they could be elected, so I don't know how we could support this, given that we have moved on our earlier regulation. Now maybe I don't understand, and if you'd like to clarify that for me, I'd like to hear that.

Mr Wildman: The point of this is that let's say, for instance, a board decided to have a student trustee. They could either be appointed by the board or there might be some process worked out where there was an election among the students for the trustee. That person is not included as the elected in the elected number of trustees. That person is in addition, just as a first nations person who is appointed to represent the first nations is not included in the total number on the board. They are in addition to those who are elected; that's all.

Mr Skarica: Perhaps I could get ministry counsel to address this issue, whether they're elected or not or it should go in that or not.

Mr Tomlinson: I've just had a brief discussion with the legislative counsel. To the extent that these three amendments, as Mrs McLeod pointed out, serve the same purpose, I think we would feel most comfortable being able to predict the consequences if the amendment the government was proposing was the one that was accepted.

Mr Wildman: You might not be surprised that I might feel my amendment is more comfortable.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Wildman. In any event, we have to deal with each of the amendments as they come.

Mr Tomlinson: If only for the simple reason that we've had the opportunity to think through the implications of ours and we haven't had the opportunity to think through —

Interjections.

The Chair: Mr Tomlinson, I'm tempted to say that your comments are unparliamentary. In any event, we have a dilemma, because we have to deal with each of the motions, so we either vote on it or we'll withdraw it. The motion is on the floor.

Mr Wildman: Can I ask for advice from legislative counsel here?

Ms Leitman: What kind of advice?

Mr Wildman: Since we have three amendments here which are aiming at the same thing, I think we understand what the purpose is. Do you see any problem if this amendment were accepted?

Ms Leitman: Which one is this one?

The Chair: We are talking about the one on page 15, Ms Leitman.

Mr Wildman: If this amendment were accepted, does that then give a problem in dealing with the government's amendment? Does it preclude dealing with the government's amendment?

Mrs McLeod: The government needs one of Mr Wildman's amendments. You need either the first one or the second one, and the reason you do is because the committee has now passed the amendment allowing for student representation and your amendment only deals with separate school — so if you want to defer it long enough that you can satisfy yourself there's nothing hidden here, that might be appropriate.

Ms Leitman: I don't think there's anything hidden, but I don't think any of them do what I think all of you want them to do, because the government's amendment did what the government wanted to do, absent the student representation, so obviously it doesn't cover student representation. Your amendment, Mr Wildman, deals only with members appointed, but that doesn't take into account the fact that separate school supporters can be elected, and indeed student trustees can be elected by the terms of the amendment we just passed. In the first one, elected again doesn't deal with appointed, so I think none of them quite do what I'm hearing all of you want to do.

Mrs McLeod: Fair enough, but how do you accommodate the earlier amendment?

Ms Leitman: There are ways to do it, but I don't think it's my role to suggest it.

Mr Wildman: We can do that. Unfortunately, we've been told we can't amend amendments.

The Chair: I think that is the constraint under which we are working and we continue to labour under, Mr Wildman: We cannot amend amendments.

Mr Wildman: This is unreasonable. We all know what we want to do and we can't do it because of an arcane government motion.

Mr Skarica: I would suggest you do what I'm going to do with the next amendment, Mr Wildman. I'm going to withdraw it and deal with it in the committee of the whole after giving legislative counsel an opportunity to deal with what we are all trying to accomplish.

The Chair: Mr Skarica, for clarification, which amendment are you taking?

Mr Wildman: On page 16; I'll be withdrawing that. I'm willing to withdraw whichever one needs to be withdrawn in order for us to achieve what we want to achieve.

The Chair: Very well.

Mr Wildman: This is difficult, but is it possible that we could — I could withdraw my proposed amendments as well — during committee of the whole put in an amendment that's required?

Mr Skarica: Yes, that's what I —

Mr Wildman: I'll withdraw mine too, then, on the understanding we're going to do something about that.

The Chair: Okay, 15 is withdrawn. Number 16?

Mr Skarica: Number 16 is a government amendment and I'm withdrawing it for the reasons just delineated.

The Chair: Is 17 also withdrawn? All right, but the record will clearly reflect that all three of these amendments are withdrawn on the understanding that there will be a new amendment proposed in the committee of the whole to reflect the discussion that has just taken place.

Mr Skarica: Page 18: As a result of many of the representations we heard in the 10 days of hearings, the government is moving, and I'm moving on behalf of the

government, that section 327 of the Education Act, as set out in section 7 of the bill, be amended by adding the following subsections:

"Transfer of assets, liabilities, employees

"(8.1) Without limiting the generality of clause (3)(d.1), a regulation under that clause may provide for,

"(a) processes to permit participation by classes of persons or bodies specified in the regulation in decision-making processes related to transfers under clause (3)(d.1);

"(b) processes for the resolution of disputes among classes of persons or bodies specified in the regulation;

"(c) the continuation of legal and other proceedings commenced by or against an existing board and the enforcement of court orders and other orders affecting an existing board;

"(d) deadlines for complying with any provision of the regulation; and

"(e) any other matter that the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers advisable in order to achieve an efficient and fair transfer of assets, liabilities and employees of existing boards to district school boards."

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, a point of order: Sorry to interrupt, but since it is a long motion which we've already debated, is there any way to consider it to be tabled as we will be considering all motions placed after 5 o'clock?

The Chair: Apparently not. Again, because —

Mrs McLeod: Because it's before 5 o'clock.

The Chair: Yes, that's right.

Mr Skarica: I'll tell you what. In the spirit of cooperation, I'll move much quicker in reading it.

The Chair: That would be helpful, thank you.

Mr Wildman: I'd like you to do it to music.

The Chair: That would not be helpful.

Mr Skarica: "Role of Education Improvement Commission" — by the way, I took a speed-reading course once, and now we'll see if it did me any good.

"(8.2) In a regulation under clause (3)(d.1), the Lieutenant Governor in Council may provide for any matter referred to in that clause or in subsection (8.1) by assigning powers and duties to the Education Improvement Commission, including but not limited to powers and duties to,

"(a) issue directives to existing boards, minority language sections of existing boards, French-language advisory committees and other classes of persons or bodies specified by the commission respecting criteria to be applied and processes to be followed in developing recommendations to the commission on any matter referred to in clause (3)(d.1) or subsection (8.1);

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"(b) issue directives respecting the participation of classes of persons or bodies specified by the commission in the development of recommendations referred to in clause (a);

"(c) make determinations respecting the transfer of assets, liabilities and employees of existing boards to district school boards;

"(d) issue orders that the commission considers necessary or advisable to give effect to the determinations made under clause (c) and impose terms and conditions on its orders; and

"(e) issue directives establishing deadlines for complying with any directive or order made by the commission under the regulations.

"Same

"(8.3) In a regulation assigning powers and duties to the Education Improvement Commission, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may authorize the commission to make interim and final orders and to vary any of its orders.

"Same

"(8.4) In a regulation assigning powers and duties to the Education Improvement Commission, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may,

"(a) specify procedures and other rules to be followed by the commission in carrying out its powers and duties;

"(b) provide that the powers and duties of the commission are subject to any terms and conditions specified in the regulation; and

"(c) provide for the establishment of panels of the commission and provide that a panel may exercise the powers and carry out the duties of the commission, subject to the restrictions, if any, specified in the regulation.

"Same

"(8.5) Examples of rules that may be specified under clause (8.4)(a) include,

"(a) rules requiring the commission to consult, in circumstances specified in the regulation, with classes of persons or bodies specified in the regulation;

"(b) rules requiring the commission to take into account, in any way that the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers appropriate, recommendations made by classes of persons or bodies specified in the regulation.

"Criteria re transfer of assets, liabilities, employees

"(8.6) In making regulations under clause (3)(d.1) and in issuing directives or orders under subsection (8.2), the Lieutenant Governor in Council or the Education Improvement Commission, as the case may be, shall,

"(a) have regard to the needs of each district school board; and

"(b) ensure that all assets, liabilities and employees of existing boards are transferred to district school boards.

"Employees

"(8.7) The following rules apply where an employee is transferred from an existing board to a district school board under a regulation made under clause (3)(d.1) or under an order issued under subsection (8.2):

"1. A person who is an employee of an existing board on the day the order or regulation transferring the employee is issued or made and who would, but for that order or regulation, still be an employee of the existing board on the day the order or regulation is to take effect is an employee of the district school board referred to in the regulation or order on the day the regulation or order is to take effect.

"2. The employment contract and the terms and conditions and rights and benefits of employment of an employee who becomes an employee of a district school board under the order or regulation together with the employment obligations of the employee are assumed by and continued with the district school board.

"3. A person's employment with an existing board shall be deemed not to have been terminated for any purpose by anything done under this part.

"Order, directive may be filed in court

"(8.8) An order or directive of the Education Improvement Commission under this section may be filed in the Ontario Court (General Division).

"Same

"(8.9) An order or directive that is filed under subsection

(8.8) shall be enforceable as if it were an order of the Ontario Court (General Division).

"Orders, directives final

"(8.10) Orders and directives of the Education Improvement Commission under this section are final and shall not be reviewed or questioned in any court."

The Chair: Well done. Debate. Mr Skarica, would you like to take a sip of water first?

Mr Skarica: No, I'm fine.

Mr Wildman: You don't have to debate at the same rate you read.

Mr Skarica: We heard daily that there were people who were concerned regarding what would happen to the transfer of assets, liabilities and employees. This gives some clarity to those concerns.

Another concern we had was that the Education Improvement Commission had unfettered discretion in dealing with basically anything. Again, this limits their ability to deal with assets, liabilities and employees, as they will be subject to regulation. I'm sure you'll have other comments, but those are some of the issues that this subsection is trying to address.

Ms Lankin: We've actually had substantial debate on this section already and I won't prolong it. I just want to put on the record that I believe this amendment is an improvement over the proposed bill and I think it is appropriate to set out more clearly in legislation some of the restrictions and directions to the Education Improvement Commission.

However, I still remain opposed to this section because it does provide a barrier to a review by court of the decisions of the commission. I believe that any court is going to look at whether or not the decisions of the commission are consistent with what has been set out in legislation, the direction that's been given to it, the responsibilities that it has been ascribed, and they are going to make their judgement about whether or not the commission's actions were reasonable in light of the intent and the direction in the legislation.

I see no reason, despite the arguments I've heard about finality by January, to preclude the opportunity of citizens or aggrieved parties from having access to the courts to attempt to make a case. I will be voting against it on that basis but I do want to say that I think it is an improvement over the proposed bill.

Mrs McLeod: As Ms Lankin has said, I am not going to prolong the debate. I believe it is absolutely essential to have something in this legislation which at least gives employees the right to be employed after January 1. I don't think it goes much beyond that, but at least it provides that. But I cannot support it as is because I cannot accept the continued ability of the EIC to have its

rules and directives considered to be not subject to a court review.

The Chair: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Skarica: I might say I appreciate the comments of the members. That's all I'll say.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Skarica. That's a first.

We'll put it to a vote. All in favour of the amendment? Opposed? The amendment is carried.

Mrs McLeod: I move that section 327 of the Education Act, as set out in section 7 of the bill, be amended by adding the following subsection:

"Geographic criteria for trustees

"(8.1) Before making a regulation under subclause 3(d)(iv), the Lieutenant Governor in Council shall establish criteria to ensure that the geographic areas established will allow the electors qualified to vote in the geographic areas to meet their members without having to travel an excessive distance and to speak with their members without incurring long distance phone charges."

Madam Chair, you'll recognize that this is similar to an amendment which was already defeated. It occurs under subsection 7(8), and subsection (8) in and of itself is the broadest, most inexplicable clause that I may have seen in a piece of legislation. I'd love to know what it means. I can only hope that it is going to be enforced, because it says: "A person who establishes a geographic area under a regulation made under subclause (3)(d)(ii)," which establishes the new board boundaries and representation, "shall have regard to any relevant submissions made by any person."

I suggest to you that we have had many relevant submissions made to us by many persons. I think your count was something in excess of 400 at the end of our committee hearings. I would think that as the board boundaries are further defined and representation determined, there are going to be many more relevant submissions made by many persons. I don't know how either the EIC or the Lieutenant Governor in Council proposes to have regard for those relevant submissions made by every and any person. I like the clause, but I would like to know how it's enforced.

In the attempt to be helpful and to recognize one of the major concerns for people in areas where the new board boundaries that are proposed are going to have huge geography, I'm at least suggesting that there are criteria that could be observed, and that is travelling excessive distances, which should not be incurred, and even a long-distance phone call. I don't think it's legitimate for somebody to have to phone long distance to talk to their school trustee. I know that doesn't help in the Metropolitan Toronto area, but it would certainly help in northern Ontario and I think it might even help in some of the southern Ontario communities, although I am not sure of that. In northern Ontario it would be very important.

Mr Wildman: I understand the intent of the amendment and I support it. I'm a little worried that the government might try to say they are responding to this amendment by establishing a 1-800-TRUSTEE number.

Mrs Johns: That's not a bad idea.

Mr Wildman: In parts of northern Ontario, that's the only way you're going to be able to ensure that there are not long-distance calls, unless we see a significant change

in the boundaries that are proposed. Even with the Sweeney recommendations, there were going to be long distance calls and significant distances.

So I understand the intent of the motion and I will support it, but I must say I'm sceptical that the government will be able or willing to concur.

The Chair: Further debate? All in favour of the amendment? Contrary? The amendment is defeated.

Mr Wildman: I move that section 327 of the Education Act, as set out in section 7 of the bill, be amended by adding the following subsection:

"Native representation

"(8.1) The number of persons appointed to a district school board under subclause (d)(vii) shall, where possible, be enough to ensure that the proportion of persons appointed under the subclause is comparable to the proportion of native students served by that district school board."

1650

Speaking to the motion, first, just as an aside, I would raise objection to the wording that is used in the Education Act and is perpetuated in this bill that refers to first nations as "bands." That is an outmoded term. It is a term that I admit is used in the federal Indian Act, but it is a term that is no longer accepted by the aboriginal community as appropriate. I would think the government in clause-by-clause in committee of the whole might consider making that amendment.

But having said that, what this attempts to do is look at the number of students that each elected trustee represents in a new district board and ensure that where there are native students attending that same board, you don't have a significantly larger number of native students represented by one first nations trustee. In other words, proportionally you have the same number.

Of course, if there's a very small number of first nations students, then you would only have one trustee, but in some of the northern boards and in some of the boards around Brantford and so on, there are significant numbers of first nations students. It might also assist then in dealing with the problem that was raised in the north with regard to representing Cree and Ojibway and in the southwest by Chief Miskokomon in representing Ojibway and Iroquoian peoples, that they wouldn't necessarily have just one native representation. If you had enough students — and I emphasize if you had enough native students — you could have two, or I suppose more, but you probably wouldn't need more than two in most cases.

Mr Skarica: As I recall, the concern we heard regarding first nations is that there were significant Cree communities and Ojibway communities and that everyone would only be represented by one. If you have two native representatives, they may both be Cree, and that would still not solve that problem, would it?

Mr Wildman: I admit that. I didn't know, to be honest with you, how to draft the motion to deal with that problem. But at least if you have the option of two, then I suppose on a local basis the local boards in conjunction with the first nations could resolve that problem.

The Chair: Any further debate? All in favour of the amendment?

Mr Skarica: Sorry. Before we vote, the EIC apparently are going to be looking into this. This is something

that I personally am somewhat sympathetic to but I'd prefer to have the EIC look into it.

The Chair: Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

Mrs McLeod: May I ask, given the fact that it is very close to 5 o'clock, whether or not we are required to place the motions in the order in which they are presented?

The Chair: I believe that is the case.

Mrs McLeod: We can't stick to certain motions so that we can have some debate?

The Chair: I will ask the advice of the clerk with respect to that.

We can if there's unanimous agreement. Five minutes.

Mrs McLeod: I would like to indicate then in just a couple of minutes that I have left, because the next series of amendments that we propose are to deal with the whole issue of both public consultation and due process in carrying out school board amalgamations which are indeed sweeping both in their consequences for governance and I believe in their consequences for education of children, that I don't believe these should be done simply by cabinet or recommendation of the EIC without there being some due consultation and public debate. So the next three motions actually present what I think are realistic criteria that there be a motion to the assembly so that there is debate on —

The Chair: Ms McLeod, could you tell us what motion you're on?

Mrs McLeod: I want to move through the next three motions to be able to debate specifically motion number 25.

Mr Wildman: We could defer the motions that precede it and move to the ones we wish to debate, if we can agree unanimously.

The Chair: We can indeed, if there is unanimous consent.

Mrs McLeod: I would move to defer the four motions, 21, 22, 23, 24, all of which I consider to be extremely important, but I'm just a little bit hopeful that the government might seriously consider motion number 25 if we have a chance to debate it.

The Chair: That has been moved.

Mr Wildman: And I would prefer, if we could, if we have time, to go to number 39.

The Chair: I remind you that we now have something like three minutes left.

Mrs McLeod: I'll move very quickly then, Madam Chair, if I may.

The Chair: Do we have agreement? Fine.

Mrs McLeod: The motion I'm placing is 25:

I move that section 327 of the Education Act, as set out in section 7 of the bill, be amended by adding the following subsections:

"Degree of support

"(8.6) The Lieutenant Governor in Council shall not make a regulation under subsection (3) establishing a district school board unless the regulation has the degree of support prescribed under subsection (8.7).

"Regulations

"(8.7) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations,

“(a) providing for the degree of support required to support

a regulation establishing a district school board; and

“(b) providing for the manner of determining the support.”

I put this motion forward because I believe there has to be some consistency in process in carrying out amalgamations. Bill 26, this government's own legislation, set out terms that would have required that in a municipal amalgamation there had to be a majority of each council and then a double majority of an overall vote. I haven't even attempted to be that prescriptive, but simply to say that the government should bring forward some process which would be reflective of the kind of local empowerment in saying whether the boards to be amalgamated agree with the process that would be comparable to what they have allowed municipalities in a municipal amalgamation. It is non-prescriptive. It simply says you have an obligation to go back to boards in the same way that you believed in Bill 26 you had an obligation to go back to municipalities before you amalgamated them.

Mr Wildman: We support it because we've already debated it with regard to my motion. We support it.

The Chair: Seeing no further debate, all in favour of the amendment? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

Mr Wildman: Shall we go to 39?

The Chair: We have 30 seconds. Do we have consent? Fine.

Mr Wildman: I move that clause 335(3)(f) of the Education Act, as set out in section 8 of the bill, be struck out and the following substituted:

“(f) conduct research and make recommendations to the minister on the outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards.”

The import of this amendment is quite clear: to move away from the facilitation and promotion of outsourcing to simply doing research and making recommendations by the Education Improvement Commission.

The Chair: We are at 5 of the clock. There is no further debate.

Mr O'Toole: Just a comment on the intent of what Mr Wildman is saying. I have some sympathy for —

The Chair: Mr O'Toole, there's no further debate. It's 5 o'clock. We are just about to go to a vote on 39.

All in favour of this amendment? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

Interjections.

The Chair: I appreciate the frustrations, ladies and gentlemen, but we have, unfortunately, the rules we have before us.

Mrs McLeod: I understand that at this point in time, not only is there no further debate but that we cannot even read our amendments?

The Chair: That's correct. All amendments, as of 5 o'clock, are deemed to be moved. Before we pass to consideration of the amendments, I want to alert members to the fact that you have received copies of responses from the ministry. You each should have a copy. We've done a careful tally, I hope, of all the questions; they appear to have all been answered, as of what was tabled today.

We deferred 21 to 25, so we're back to 21. All in favour of the amendment? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

1700

Mr McLean: Madam Chair, could I get a clarification? In the rest of the amendments that we have, there are government amendments and there are opposition amendments.

The Chair: That's right.

Mr McLean: Are we going to pass certain ones and none of the others or are they all deemed to have been passed?

The Chair: No, Mr McLean, they are all deemed to have been moved. We now pass on to an amendment-by-amendment vote. That's what we're doing. If you wish to vote for any of the amendments, you may, regardless of where they originate.

Mr McLean: Could I move that all the government amendments be accepted and passed and reported to the House as part of the bill?

The Chair: Mr McLean, we are required to go through amendment by amendment, and we will do that.

Page 22, section 7 of the bill, subsection 327(8.3) of the Education Act. All in favour of the amendment? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

Page 23, section 7 of the bill, subsection 327(8.4) of the Education Act. All in favour of the amendment? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

Page 24, section 7 of the bill, subsection 327(8.5) of the Education Act. All in favour of the amendment? Contrary? The amendment is defeated.

Skipping to 26, 25 having been voted on, section 7 of the bill, subsection 327(9) of the Education Act. All in favour of this amendment? Opposed? The amendment is carried.

Section 7 of the bill, subsection 328(2) of the Education Act.

Mrs McLeod: Can I withdraw it?

The Chair: Yes, you may. The amendment is withdrawn.

Ms Lankin: How can you? These are deemed to have been moved.

The Chair: Ms McLeod did state in the beginning that all the amendments dealing with time would be withdrawn by the Liberal caucus.

Ms Lankin: I don't want to be a stickler, but given that we are being sticklers about the rules, she said it was her intent to do that and as each amendment came up she withdrew those amendments. I put to you, Madam Chair, given that you have interpreted those time allocation motions absolutely to the letter, you have now put all the rest of the amendments that are before us. We are without any power, even if we wished to, collectively in unanimous agreement with each other, do anything about it. I suggest to you that you can't withdraw those motions at this point in time.

Mrs McLeod: Maybe one will accidentally pass.

Ms Lankin: There you go.

The Chair: Ms McLeod is withdrawing her withdrawal; therefore, we'll go to a vote.

All in favour of this amendment? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

Section 7, clause 329(2)(a) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 7, subsection 329(3) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 7, subsection 329(4) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 7, clauses 333(4)(a), (b) and (c) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 7, subsection 333(4) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

Section 7, clauses 333(5)(a), (b) and (c) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 7, subsection 333(5) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

Section 7, subsection 333(13) of the Education Act: All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Shall section 7, as amended, carry? All in favour? Opposed? Section 7, as amended, is carried.

Page 31, section 8 of the bill, subsection 334(2) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsection 334(13) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? The amendment is carried.

Section 8, subsection 334(14) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? The motion is defeated.

Section 8, subsection 335(2.1) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, clause 335(3)(d) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? It's carried unanimously.

Section 8, clause 335(3)(e). All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Section 8, clause 335(3)(f) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

The motion on page 39 we have dealt with.

Section 8, clause 335(3)(f).

Mrs Johns: I think this out of order since we've already voted on —

Mr O'Toole: It's dealing with the same clause.

The Chair: Yes, it is; you're quite right. Page 39 we voted on before 5 o'clock, section 8, clause 335(3)(f).

Section 8, clause 335(3)(f), on page 40. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Dealing with the same clause, all in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, clause 335(3)(g) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, clause 335(3)(j) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

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Section 8, clause 335(3)(k.1): All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, clause 335(3)(l.1): All in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

Section 8, clause 335(3)(k.1) —

Clerk of the Committee (Ms Tonia Grannum): No, this should be 1.1.

The Chair: This is 1.1? Page 46, section 8 of the bill, clause 335(3) — that's an 1?

Clerk of the Committee: It's changed on mine.

The Chair: Clause 335(3)(l.1): All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, clause 335(3)(l.2) of the Education Act: All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, clause 335(3)(l.3) —

Mrs McLeod: On a point of order, Madam Chair: I believe this would no longer be in order because the children's bill of rights was defeated in an earlier amendment.

The Chair: Very well. You are correct, the motion is out of order.

Section 8, clause 335(3)(l.4) of the Education Act: All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, clause 335(3)(l.5) of the Education Act: All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, clause 335(3)(l.6) of the Education Act: All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, clause 335(3)(l.7) of the Education Act: All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, clause 335(3)(l.8) of the Education Act: All in favour?

Mr Wildman: Just a question of order: Has this already been dealt with because we passed that amendment, or not?

Mrs McLeod: This actually is now under the section where the EIC would advise the minister on how to do it, how to make student representation happen. This is one that the government probably wants to support, not that we can debate it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs McLeod, for not debating it. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, clause 335(3)(m) of the Education Act: All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Section 8, clause 335(3)(n) of the Education Act: All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsection 335(4) of the Education Act: All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsection 335(5) of the Education Act: All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsection 335(6) of the Education Act: All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsection 338(2.1) of the Education Act: All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsection 338(2.2) of the Education Act: All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsection 338(3) of the Education Act: All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsection 340(1) of the Education Act: All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, clauses 340(1)(c) and (d) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsection 340(2) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsection 340(5) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Section 8, section 340 of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsection 341(1) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Section 8, subsection 341(1) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, clause 341(1)(a) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, clause 341(1)(b) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, clause 341(1)(e) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, clause 341(1)(e) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, clause 341(2)(a) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Section 8, subsection 341(2.1) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Section 8, subsections 341(2.1) to (2.8) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsection 341(3) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsection 341(5) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Section 8, section 341 of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsections 342(1) and (2) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, paragraph 2 of subsection 342(2) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Mr Wildman: That's one I would have liked to heard a debate on.

The Chair: There's always committee of the whole, Mr Wildman.

Section 8, subsections 342(4) to (4.2) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8 of the bill, subsection 342(6) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Section 8, subsection 342(6) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsections 342(8) and (9) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Section 8, subsection 342(9) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

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Section 8, subsection 342(10) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Section 8, subsections 342(2) to (10) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, section 342 of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsection 343(1) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsection 343(2) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsection 343(3) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Section 8, subsection 344(2) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Section 8, subsections 344(1), (2) and (3) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsection 344(2) of the Education Act. All in favour?

Mr Duncan: It's out of order.

The Chair: I'm sorry. We're going so quickly. Let me just read it through.

Mr Duncan: It's identical to 86.

The Chair: It is indeed. Thanks very much. The motion was out of order.

Section 8, section 344 of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, section 345 of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, subsection 346(6) of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Section 8, section 346 of the Education Act. All in favour? Opposed? The amendment is lost.

We now move to section 8 as amended. All in favour? Opposed? The section is carried, as amended.

Section 9: There are no amendments to section 9. All in favour? Opposed? Section 9 is carried.

The motion on page 90 is out of order. I understand section 350 is not part of the Education Act, or at least it's not the subject of this legislation.

Mrs McLeod: It's section 10 of the bill that's being amended.

The Chair: Yes, but it is not —

Mrs McLeod: If you can change the Education Act by changing sections of the bill, why can't you change the Education Act by adding a section? It adds a section to the Education Act in the same way that every other motion affects the Education Act in this bill.

The Chair: Just give me a moment to read it, please, Ms McLeod. We're moving at such a clip that it's difficult.

I think the answer, Ms McLeod, is that 350 is not part of the bill and we can't add to it at this point.

Mrs McLeod: Actually, 10 is part of the bill and it's section 10 that I'm amending.

Interjections.

The Chair: I'm receiving conflicting advice. We'll vote on 90.

Mrs McLeod: Don't worry, it won't pass, but it is in order.

The Chair: The motion is in order. All in favour, section 10 of the bill, section 350 of the act? Opposed? Defeated.

We lost the motion, but we learned something new.

Mrs Johns: Was that in your non-partisan role that you said that?

The Chair: I meant as a committee. You know better than that, Ms Johns. I have done my damndest.

Subsection 11(1) of the bill, subsection 1(2) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996.

Interjection.

The Chair: We are moving far too quickly. We have to go back and vote on section 10. All in favour? Opposed? The section is carried.

Now, subsection 11(1) of the bill, subsection 1(2) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Subsection 11(2), clause 6(4)(b) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Mrs McLeod: That was one last chance.

The Chair: Hope springs eternal.

Subsection 11(2), subsection 6(5) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

Now we vote on section 11. All in favour? Opposed? Section 11 is carried.

The amendment to section 12 of the bill, on page 94. All in favour? Opposed? The amendment is carried.

A further amendment to section 12, on page 95. All in favour? Opposed? Defeated.

A third amendment to section 12, on page 96.

Mr Skarica: It's out of order.

The Chair: Yes, it is a repetition. It's out of order.

All in favour of section 12, as amended? Opposed? Carried.

Section 13. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

There being no further sections of the bill, the amendment that is on page 97 is out of order.

Shall the title carry? All in favour? Opposed? The title carries.

Shall the bill, as amended, carry? All in favour? Opposed? The bill carries, as amended.

Shall I report this bill as amended? In favour? Opposed? Thank you very much.

Mrs McLeod: Point of order, Madam Chair: I recognize that the committee dealt with and defeated the motion raised in committee by Mr Duncan yesterday, but I'm wondering at what point in the procedure, whether now in clause by clause or in committee of the whole or at any point, the motion can again be placed for consideration that the government would voluntarily refer this bill to Court of Appeal to determine whether it is constitutional. At what point could that be reconsidered?

The Chair: I would think, Ms McLeod, because we're under the time allocation motion, that the place to raise it is in committee of the whole.

Mrs McLeod: Is it possible in committee of the whole for a member of the committee to place that motion?

The Chair: It is certainly not possible here, because we are not able to debate at this point. I'll seek advice of the clerk as to what we can do if it's not the committee of the whole.

Mrs McLeod: I'd appreciate it.

The Chair: It appears there is no avenue to debate Mr Duncan's motion other than perhaps in question period.

Mrs McLeod: It's not possible for a member of the committee or any member of the Legislature to place a motion related to this in committee of the whole. Would it not be possible for at least a private member's resolution to be brought forward in private members' hour? Is that the only recourse we would have to have that reconsidered?

The Chair: Or question period.

Mrs McLeod: Question period doesn't subject it to a vote of the House.

The Chair: It does not, but it does bring it to the attention of the ministers.

Thank you very much for what has been an incredible amount of work by everybody who has been on this committee. We acknowledged everyone's efforts yesterday. Let me acknowledge it again. You have been an incredible group to work with and travel with.

We are adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1733.

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Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East / -Est PC)

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East / -Est PC)

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte PC)

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North / -Nord PC)

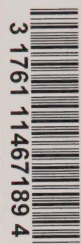
Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes:

Ms Marilyn Leitman, legislative counsel

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Staff / Personnel: Mr Ted Glenn, research officer, Legislative Research Service



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